THE Hudson REVIEW

MARIUS BEWLEY:
Henry James and "Life"

RICHARD CLAY:
The Nominating Committee—a story

W. D. SNODGRASS:
Lawrence's Rocking-Horse

FRANK BUTLER:
Amid a Place of Stone—a story

EARLE ERNST:
A Theatre of Beauty without Tears

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Notes on Contributors

MARIUS BEWLEY'S article in this issue is a chapter from *The Eccentric Design*, which is to be published this fall by the Columbia University Press.

A book of poems by JAMES MERRILL is due for publication early in 1959.

PARIS LEARY is a young American poet, now engaged in graduate work at Oxford. His poems have appeared in various magazines in England and in this country.

W. D. SNODGRASS is a Hudson Review Fellow in Poetry for 1958-59. A book of his poems is to be published in January by Knopf.

WILDER BENTLEY is currently teaching in the Language Arts and Humanities divisions of San Francisco State College and is active in the Poetry Center Workshop there.

ALAN NEAME is an English writer who has been living in Lebanon.

Stories by RICHARD CLAY have frequently appeared in this Review. He is currently at work on a novel.

FRANK BUTLER'S "Amid a Place of Stone" is a section from a novel-in-progress.

A volume of poetry by CHARLES TOMLINSON, *Seeing is Believing*, was recently brought out by McDowell, Obolensky.

RUTH FAINLIGHT is living in England at present, after having spent the past four years in Spain, chiefly in Majorca.

Poems by GEOFFREY HILL have been published in various anthologies and periodicals in this country and in Europe. His first book is scheduled to appear early in 1959.

EARL MINER teaches English at the University of California at Los Angeles; ROBERT H. BROWER teaches Japanese at Stanford University. They are collaborating on a critical study of Japanese court poetry and a separate anthology of translations.

(*continued on page 290*)

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The Hudson Review

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MARIUS BEWLEY

Henry James and "Life"

THE ELEMENTARY FACT to begin from in any consideration of James's fiction is that he is the master of the international theme. The international novel has had a long but tentative history in America. When it finally reaches its climax in James what we are given is not merely a spectacle of divergent national manners and attitudes played off against each other in carefully selected areas, but a serious attempt to resolve these conflicts, to escape from the restrictive categories of the provincial, local, and native, into a more spacious, humane, and comprehensive reality. This is a passage outward and upward for the European no less than for the American component. James searches throughout his fictions for a reality that is poised in suspension among the multiple possibilities that Europe and America offer him, but which is really the property of neither.

The international theme is not, then, a mere comedy of manners. It broaches for James the most significant questions of value. I am concerned here with showing how James used the international theme to probe under the appearances of life towards a moral reality that remained essentially uncommitted to any national pattern or allegiance. James was a confessed pragmatist to whom moral values were acceptable only when they had proved and validated themselves in terms of human experience. Life proved itself in the living. But as social conventions and attitudes, which are the materials with which the novelist works, are frequently dissociated in the actual world from the souces of life and refreshment, the social surfaces of James's fictions are often screens behind which we have to look to discover the values he believed in and the judgements he was making. They are often different from what they appear to be at first. This is not contrivance in James: in some ways it is the level at which his art approaches life most closely. I shall consider only one example here.

"Madame de Mauves" is a story of less than a hundred pages which James wrote in 1873, and it is a first-rate piece of work. *The American*, which it slightly resembles in some ways, was not written

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for several more years, and it is not nearly as good. "Madame de Mauves" may be taken as a paradigm of Henry James's technique and intentions in dealing with the international theme, and I present it here as a beautifully representative story. Its representativeness is of a highly significant kind, and it illustrates the way in which the international theme could become not only the subject but the form of James's fiction at one and the same time.

The story tells of how Euphemia Cleve, a rich young American girl at a French convent school, is introduced to the older brother of one of her classmates, Richard de Mauves, a French aristocrat of highly questionable morals, and is enticed into a marriage that will salvage the wavering financial fortunes of the old family. The story opens a few years after this marriage has taken place when Bernard Longmore, a young American visiting Europe, chances to meet Madame de Mauves through a mutual friend. She is beautiful, and obviously unhappy, and Bernard falls more or less in love. At least he pities her and wishes to cheer her. Her husband is currently involved in an affair and finding the American stiffness of his wife in such matters an inconvenience. To justify his own conduct, and in the interests of easier practical management, he tries to arrange for a love affair between Bernard and his wife: he has his mistress, she should have her lover. Being only a French nobleman, he innocently fails to realize that passion in Americans is always controlled by conscience. Towards promoting this affair, M. de Mauves enlists the services of his redoubtable sister, Madame Clairin, who is a splendid comic creation of the morally sinister sort that James could do so well. In an interview with the reluctant Longmore—an interview which has the redeeming grace of being exquisitely funny—Madame Clairin lays all the shocking cards on the table while Bernard grows hot under the collar:

> "My brother, in a single word, is in love with another woman. I don't judge him; I don't judge my sister-in-law. I would have kept my husband's affection, or I would frankly have done without it, before this. But my sister is an odd compound. I don't profess to understand her. Therefore it is, in a measure, that I appeal to you, her fellow-countryman. Of course you'll be surprised at my way of looking at the matter, and I admit it's a way in use only among people whose family traditions compel them to take a superior view of things." Madame Clairin paused, and Longmore wondered where her family traditions were going to lead her.

They lead her far enough to make a clear-cut distinction be-

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tween the American and European codes in the hands of their more extreme proponents. Madame Clairin's speech is a splendid achievement of monumental vulgarity. She is the Countess Gemini without the finer touches and the saving graces, but still superb in her soiled assurance. Her brassy cynicism is, in the end, not really distinguishable from a wilting sentimentality: "The de Mauves are real Frenchmen, and their wives—I may say it—have been worthy of them . . . . They were femmes d'esprit. When they had a headache, they put on a little rouge and came to supper as usual; and when they had a heartache, they put a little rouge on their hearts."

As opposed to critical opinion a generation ago, Jamesian critics today concede that James favours his Americans, and surely, one thinks, Madame Clairin, and her dissolute brother, who does not even have the grace of being amusing, will prove easy moral foils to the two noble Americans, and that *seems* to be the way James plays it. Madame de Mauves and Bernard have all the unbending puritan righteousness of Hilda and Kenyon in *The Marble Faun*. Even their speech accents are similar. At one of their meetings Madame de Mauves says to Bernard:

> "I believe, Mr. Longmore, . . . that I have nothing on earth but a conscience,—it's a good thing to tell you so,—nothing but a dogged, clinging, inexpugnable conscience. Does that prove me indeed to be of your faith and race, and have you one for which you can say as much? I don't say it in vanity, for I believe that if my conscience will prevent me from doing anything very base, it will effectually prevent me from doing anything very fine."
>
> "I am delighted to hear it," cried Longmore. "We are made for each other. It's very certain I too shall never do anything fine. And yet I have fancied that in my case this inexpugnable organ you so eloquently describe might be blinded and gagged awhile, in a fine cause, if not turned out of doors. In yours," he went on with the same appealing irony, "is it absolutely invincible?"
>
> But her fancy made no concession to his sarcasm. "Don't laugh at your conscience," she answered gravely: "that's the only blasphemy I know."

They are made for each other, but made for each other at a distance. Bernard returns to America, and Madame de Mauves remains with her husband where her indignant morality scores the final triumph. Her husband, we hear indirectly on the last page, puts a bullet through his head when his wife, whom he has now perversely learned to love, refuses to forgive him his infidelities: "She was stone, she was ice, she was outraged virtue."

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A certain ambiguity has been remarked in this story by critics before, but it has usually been attributed to changing fashions in heroines and emotions which, quite apart from James's intentions, have swung our sympathies away from the virtuous Americans to take a more indulgent view of the French characters. Actually, this ambiguity is central to the formal structure of the story, and it rests at the very heart of James's moral meaning as we see it developing throughout his work.

Diagramming works of art is the activity of the literary machine shop; but there is a symmetry so perfect in "Madame de Mauves," and so significantly embodying the interaction of the American and European traditions, that it can do no harm for once to map out in one's mind the main lines of development in the action. This action may be thought of as represented by two parallel lines, horizontally placed. The top line, down which Madame de Mauves and Bernard Longmore move, is the line of the American conscience, signifying sacrifice and renunciation. The bottom line represents the primrose path of M. de Mauves and Madame Clairin. It is the French way and signifies acceptance of the senses and, in a qualified way, life. James's task is to achieve some kind of communication between the two lines, to discover a field in which the mutual hostility of the two ways can be artistically resolved, for the marriage of Madame de Mauves and her husband represents only an arbitrary yoking together of what is essentially irreconcilable. There is a prefatory communication between the two lines at the very beginning of the story in the comprehensive consciousness of the French grandmother who understands the implications of both traditions and foresees disaster if they are joined, but who nevertheless encourages the marriage between Euphemia and her grandson in the interests of the family fortune. But this is only a prelude to the two attempts in the narrative, one attempt being made from either side in the direction of the other, to bring the two traditions together in some kind of harmony.

These two attempts occur in the two major scenes of the novel before the climax on the terrace when Madame de Mauves sends Bernard back to America in the name of conscience. The first scene is that one which I have already described in which Madame Clairin does her best to arrange a love affair between Bernard Longmore and her sister-in-law for the convenience of her brother. This scene constitutes a strenuous effort on the part of the French line to com-

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municate with the American line, the nature of which it abysmally fails to understand. The result is that they remain as parallel as ever, and Bernard flees into the countryside in a state of moral shock.

The second scene, which balances this one, follows immediately afterwards, and represents the contrasting attempt of the American to move in the direction of the French level. I said a moment ago that after his interview with Madame Clairin the two lines remained as parallel as ever, but this is not quite true. The interview was clearly a necessary introduction to Bernard's interlude at the French inn, from which he returns with a less rigid conception of correct behaviour. This scene gives us what I take to be James's essential values in this story, and in much of his later work as well, and it is finely done. James's description of landscape (and this is unusual with him) enforces the moral meaning he wishes to communicate. After leaving Madame Clairin, Bernard has wandered for a couple of hours in the forest, and at last he emerges into a rural countryside that is strange to him:

> The fields and trees were of a cool metallic green; the grass looked as if it might stain your trousers, and the foliage your hands. The clear light had a sort of mild grayness; the sunbeams were of silver rather than gold. A great red-roofed, high-stacked farm-house, with whitewashed walls and a straggling yard, surveyed the high road, on one side, from behind a transparent curtain of poplars. A narrow stream, half choked with emerald rushes and edged with gray aspens, occupied the opposite quarter. The meadows rolled and sloped away gently to the low horizon, which was barely concealed by the continuous line of clipped and marshaled trees. The prospect was not rich, but it had a frank homeliness which touched the young man's fancy. It was full of light atmosphere and diffused sunshine, and if it was prosaic, it was soothing.
>
> . . . In twenty minutes he came to a village which straggled away to the right, among orchards and *potagers*. On the left, at a stone's throw from the road, stood a little pink-faced inn, which reminded him that he had not breakfasted . . . In the inn he found a brick-tiled parlor and a hostess in sabots and a white cap, whom, over the omelette she speedily served him,—borrowing license from the bottle of sound red wine which accompanied it,—he assured that she was a true artist. To reward his compliment, she invited him to smoke his cigar in her little garden behind the house.

While lounging on "a bench against the pink wall, in the sun, which was not too hot," he begins to ask himself certain questions which will be asked repeatedly by James's characters through the full course of his career:

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> To renounce—to renounce again—to renounce forever—was this all that youth and longing and resolve were meant for? Was experience to be muffled and mutilated, like an indecent picture? Was a man to sit and deliberately condemn his future to be the blank memory of a regret, rather than the long reverberation of a joy? Sacrifice? The word was a trap for minds muddled with fear, an ignoble refuge of weakness.

If we are to realize, finally, the importance James attached to these questions he gives Bernard, it will be well to turn to Book Fifth, Part II, of *The Ambassadors*, and read again the famous speech of Strether's in Gloriani's garden in which he tells little Bilham to live: "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that, what *have* you had?" The question of what James means by "life" is a radical one for him. It is the one great overwhelming problem that most of his characters have to face sooner or later, in one way or another.

As Bernard sits in the garden of the French inn, the answers to the questions he has been asking himself seem to be given to him by the appearance of a young French couple, an artist and his mistress, who are living there. The young man has gone with his artist's equipment down to the meadow stream to paint, and presently the girl, Claudine, comes from the inn to join him:

> . . . she came out of the house with her hat and parasol, prepared to follow her companion. She had on a pink muslin dress and a little white hat, and she was as pretty as a Frenchwoman needs to be to be pleasing. She had a clear brown skin and a bright dark eye, and a step which seemed to keep time to some slow music, heard only by herself. Her hands were encumbered with various articles which she seemed to intend to carry with her. In one arm she held her parasol and a large roll of needlework, and in the other a shawl and a heavy white umbrella, such as painters use for sketching.

This young couple embodies the positive values James wishes to give us. They are a part of the fresh summer afternoon, the sunshine and the greenery. They are young, happy, spontaneous, and although Bernard later learns from the hostess that they are not married, they are certainly innocent with the kind of innocence that matters. They represent a positive health that glows radiantly when put beside the aristocratic Frenchwoman, Madame Clairin, or equally when put beside Madame de Mauves. It is not possible to reproduce their effect in the story by quotation, but they are as near

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as James ever came to giving us the kind of young people that one meets everywhere in D. H. Lawrence. They are the best commentary in James's fictions on what Strether meant by his rather tired recommendation of "life." James has carefully built up an atmosphere of cheerful domesticity in the kitchen and garden of the inn, and he has given us a sense of sun- and air-filled countryside as the background which enforces the values he wishes the young couple to suggest. I do not mean that James absolutely commits himself to them as the ideal embodiment of what he believes in. They are, after all, only figures that we glimpse at a strategic moment for a paragraph or two. But their happy, exuberant existence is a reproach to the moral characters of the American woman and her French sister-in-law: as much to the festering righteousness of the American as to the more amiable corruption of Madame Clairin. And they are a reproach despite the somewhat tentative character of their union:

> Longmore was puzzled for a moment. Then, "You mean she's not his wife?" he asked.
>
> She shrugged her shoulders. "What shall I tell you? They are not *des hommes sérieux*, those gentlemen! They don't engage themselves for an eternity. It's none of my business, and I've no wish to speak ill of madame. She's a very nice little woman, and she loves her *jeune homme* to distraction."

If, and when, they cease to love each other, one can be sure that Claudine will not put a little rouge on her heart as she dresses for dinner before going downstairs to fulfill the conventional social duties for a husband whom she hates; and on the other hand she will not hover over him like a female Chillingworth to exact the terrible moral vengeance that Madame de Maves claims in the end. This young couple are free of the moral limitations of *both* the American and European traditions as they are embodied in the two principal female characters in this story. Claudine and her young artist exist somewhere between the two diagrammatic lines I posited in the beginning, for they both accept the senses and live (so the image James gives us suggests) with an emotional integrity and vitality which acts effectively as a conscience, even if it is not quite up to New England standards.

Bernard is to some degree susceptible to the lesson Claudine and her lover have given him, and he returns to Madame de Mauves in a softened mood. She senses the change, and in twilight on the

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terrace she plays her "renunciation" scene for all it is worth. When one compares the histrionics of her speech to Longmore, filled with its vanities and self-regarding rhetoric, in which she forewarns him to make her no profession of affection—when one compares this with the simple naturalness of the young lovers at the inn, one must admit that James clinches his point. Here is Madame de Mauves to Longmore:

> "When I said just now that I had a very high opinion of you, I meant it very seriously. It was not a vain compliment. I believe there is no appeal one may make to your generosity which can remain long unanswered. If this were to happen,—if I were to find you selfish where I thought you generous, narrow where I thought you large,"—and she spoke slowly, with her voice lingering with emphasis on each of these words,—"vulgar where I thought you rare,—I should suffer keenly. I should say to myself in the dull days of my future, 'There was one man who might have done so and so; and he, too, failed.' But this shall not be. You have made too good an impression on me not to make the very best. If you wish to please me forever, there's a way."

I have quoted this speech here because it shows what rare but unobtrusive control the early James had over the language of his characters. The whole moral pose rings false in the over-niceness of Madame de Mauves's phrasings. This was not James's way of writing at any time, and all one has to do is compare almost any of Madame de Mauves's speeches with any of Madame Clairin's to see how sure James was of himself. The "way" that Madame de Mauves refers to in the last line is naturally that Bernard should return to America and see her no more. Back in America, Bernard settles down to a life which, as the years go by, one feels will come to resemble Miles Coverdale's at the close of *The Blithedale Romance*, and which looks forward to Marcher's empty career in "The Beast in the Jungle."

This is a splendid story. It is representatively Jamesian in the best sense of the word, but one does wish that James had returned to the type offered in the young couple at the inn a little more often, and developed them a little further. What the story indicates clearly enough is that James's concern with the international theme is a concern with life. If his attempts to define what he meant by "life" sometimes seem a little dry, he leaves us in no doubt in the end. "Madame de Mauves" is one of his most direct answers.

"Life" means for James pretty much what it has meant for all great artists from Shakespeare to Lawrence, but every artist has to

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reach towards life in his art in those images and symbols which his sensibility and his time allow him, whether they are the images of Hawthornian "inner spheres," Laurentian dark gods, positive visions of Byzantium, or negative ones of the Unreal City. For James the image of life was Europe, but it was a far more complicated image than the simple statement suggests. It was not simply the great good place to which Americans went; it was, more than anything else, a test of integrity, the field of honour on which the young man proved his worth. It was the Green Chapel towards which the young knight worked his way through the winter waste land and through many dangers to bring back the spring in his own heart. Few, if any, reached it; most fell by the way, and James's fictions celebrate the failures more than those who succeeded. Poor Bernard Longmore was among the first who fell.

If Europe exists in James's imagination as a condition of the personal fulfillment which is life, it is a condition only, not life itself, and Europe is a treacherous guide. The narrator in James's early story, "Four Meetings," says to the pathetic little teacher who longs to go to Europe, Caroline Spencer:

> "You've got the great American disease, and you've got it 'bad'—the appetite, morbid and monstrous, for colour and form, for the picturesque and romantic at any price. I don't know whether we come into the world with it—with the germs implanted and antecedent to experience; rather perhaps we catch it early, almost before developed consciousness —we *feel*, as we look about, that we're going (to save our souls, or at least our senses) to be thrown back on it hard. We're like travellers in the desert—deprived of water and subject to the terrible mirage, the torment of illusion, of the thirst-fever. They hear the plash of fountains, they see green gardens and orchards that are hundred of miles away. So we with *our* thirst—except that with us it's *more* wonderful: we have before us the beautiful old things we've never seen at all, and we do at last see them—if we're lucky!—we simply recognize them. What experience does is merely confirm and consecrate our confident dream."

Europe considered merely as the "picturesque and romantic" is not reality but an illusion of reality; it is not life but a mirage of life. It can assist the inhibited American to break through the provincial and Puritan barriers which have excluded him from his own inner sphere of reality, it can open up to him the life of the senses and the world of imagination and colour, but more frequently James's Americans do not know how to use the gifts and clues that Europe gives them towards that inner life which *no* tradition can give, but

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which each man must discover and cultivate in himself. James's novels and stories compose a full and tragic record of the many different ways in which his American pilgrims fail to reach the Celestial City. The young New England artist, Roderick Hudson, comes early in the tragic roster.

For Caroline Spencer, Europe was mainly the possibility of romantic ruins and picturesque views. Because her essential conception of life was as two dimensional as a picture postcard's there is little point in considering her "case" here. But the handsome appealing young Roderick was looking for life in a very different sense, and *Roderick Hudson* is one of James's most interesting early explorations of the theme. The thirst of the nineteenth century American for life is admirably symbolized in the opening pages of the novel by Roderick's statuette which Rowland Mallett admires so much:

> The statuette, in bronze, something more than two feet high, represented a naked youth drinking from a gourd. The attitude was perfectly simple. The lad was squarely planted on his feet, with his legs a little apart; his back was slightly hollowed, his head thrown back; his hands were raised to support the rustic cup. There was a loosened fillet of wild flowers about his head, and his eyes, under their drooped lids, looked straight into the cup . . . The figure might have been some beautiful youth of ancient fable—Hylas or Narcissus, Paris or Endymion. Its beauty was the beauty of natural movement; nothing had been sought to be represented but the perfection of an attitude.

One cannot help wondering if, down the years, this gourd does not a little relate, in the subconscious depths of James's mind, to the symbol of the golden bowl. But here, of course, the thing to recognize—as Rowland Mallett immediately does—is what an un-New England type this naked youth, in his beauty of natural movement, is. What he symbolizes relates to the values represented by the young couple in the French inn garden. The danger that often confronts James's characters is that, having been deprived for so long, they really can't be trusted with the cup when it finally comes into their hands. There is an exchange between Rowland and Roderick in Chapter II that is a warning, for the wary reader, of danger ahead:

> "Tell me this," said Rowland. "Did you mean anything very particular by your young Water-drinker? Does he represent an idea? Is he a pointed symbol?"
>
> Hudson raised his eyebrows and gently stroked his hair. "Why, he's

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youth, you know; he's innocence, he's health, he's strength, he's curiosity. Yes, he's a lot of grand things."

"And is the cup also a symbol?"

"The cup is knowledge, pleasure, experience. Anything of that kind."

"Then he's drinking very deep," said Rowland.

Hudson gave an approving nod. "Well, poor wretch, you wouldn't have him die of thirst, would you?"

It is typical of Rowland Mallett that he would reach the conclusion all by himself that it was water in that gourd. At any rate, Roderick carries a thirst to Europe that can easily match his bronze boy's, and he is not prepared to satisfy it with water. Roderick represents the American who takes to Europe too readily, who loves it perhaps too much, and whose facility of assimilation is unleavened by judgement and experience. After a short interval abroad Roderick feels that he has come to know and understand Europe, but James's point is that he hasn't. America has not provided him with the knowledge necessary for assimilating the experience of Europe on a level of emotional maturity. His death is, in fact, symbolic. He falls from the "heights"—heights which, with his talents, he has been able to scale easily enough, but upon which he cannot maintain a secure footing. Roderick is as unable as Bernard Longmore in "Madame de Mauves" to bring the two traditions significantly together. He behaves in a manner exactly opposite to Longmore's: he rejects the American or the New England tradition in favour of the European, but he is unable to become a part of that tradition simply because he, too, has the "appetite, morbid and monstrous, for colour and form, for the picturesque and romantic at any price." Desiring to drink deeply of life, he mistakes, in his innocence, the mirage of colour and plashing fountains for the reality itself.

James's queerest treatment of the American's thirst for "life" which overreaches itself is his rather macabre little story, published in 1899, "Europe." In this story James imagines the cup to have been inordinately withheld, far beyond even Strether's long term of deprivation, with results that are grotesque, and perhaps a little monstrous. The story tells of three Boston spinsters, Rebecca, Maria, and Jane, the daughters of an ancient woman, Mrs. Rimmle, whose life span has been prodigious and whose future duration is unpredictable. The daughters long for Europe—long with the passionate intensity of the specially deprived—but they delay their journey until the death of their mother will leave them free. James's story is

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not explicit about the ages of these women, but we learn from an entry in *The Notebooks* that the mother is approaching her century and that at least one of the daughters is seventy. The selfish ancient mother has retained them at home each time they prepared for Europe by announcing her imminent death, and keeping to her bed until the plans were abandoned and the trip postponed. Miss Jane alone breaks free of this deadlock, and accompanies an elderly respectable couple, the Hathaways, on their trip to Europe. Poor Miss Jane's thirst for "life" seems greater than Roderick's in proportion as she is decades and decades older—he, twenty-four or -five; she, more or less seventy. The subject, by its very nature, carries overtones of the morally sinister, and these are notes which James knows how to strike with rare skill. In Florence, Miss Jane simply refuses to return to America with the now shocked and dumbfounded Hathaways. The narrator of the story is given the facts in an exchange with his informant, who is an old acquaintance of the Rimmles:

> "Then she simply refused—"
>
> "To budge from Florence? Simply. She had it out there with the poor Hathaways, who felt responsible for her safety, pledged to restore her to her mother's, to her sisters' hands, and showed herself in a light, they mention under their breath, that made their dear old hair stand on end. Do you know what, when they first got back, they said of her—at least it was *his* phrase, to two or three people?"
>
> I thought a moment. "That she had 'tasted blood'? "
>
> My visitor fairly admired me. "How clever of you to guess! It's exactly what he did say. She appeared—she continues to appear, it seems—in a new character."
>
> I wondered a little. "But that's exactly—don't you remember?—what Miss Maria reported to us from them; that we 'wouldn't know her.' "
>
> My sister-in-law perfectly remembered. "Oh yes, she broke out from the first. But when they left her she was worse."
>
> "Worse?"
>
> "Well, different—different from anything she ever *had* been or—for that matter—had had a chance to be." My reporter hung fire a moment, but presently faced me. "Rather strange and free and obstreperous."
>
> "Obstreperous?" I wondered again.

It's a peculiarly suggestive and sinister word in this context. But there is more to come:

> My companion met my eyes a moment. "You don't know the queerest part. I mean the way it has *most* brought her out."

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> I turned it over; I felt I should like to know—to that degree indeed that, oddly enough, I jocosely disguised my eagerness. "You don't mean she has taken to drink?"
>
> My visitor had a dignity—and yet had to have a freedom. "She has taken to flirting."

The last we hear of Jane abroad is that: "She's bent on the East." The situation has its aspects of comedy, but it is very tragic and macabre comedy. The story is one of James's most bitter and annihilating comments on those American deprivations and starknesses which—it is James's deliberate point—constitute exclusion from life. It is a grim and essentially poetic treatment of the nineteenth century American's deep longing for the values of Europe (*and to read the story properly we must understand what a complex* life-symbol Europe had become for James), and of his ultimate, tragic exclusion.

The two sisters who remain behind, Rebecca and Maria, represent the tragedy in its roundness, and the closing pages in which they figure most largely are the finest in the story. The whole action is played out on its small and highly formal stage under the fixed dead gaze of the mother, whose presence becomes a richly symbolic one in the context:

> Though wasted and shrunken she still occupied her high-backed chair with a visible theory of erectness, and her intensely aged face—combined with something dauntless that belonged to her presence and that was effective even in this extremity—might have been that of some immemorial sovereign, of indistinguishable sex, brought forth to be shown to the people in disproof of the rumour of extinction.

The image of the Mother, usually a life-symbol, is used in this story as a symbol of life-in-death, even to the point of giving her an indistinguishable sex. The three aged sisters represent a scale of maladjustments to life, symbolized by Europe. There is Jane, whose deep thirst drives her to what we can only recognize as a deranged and drunken grab at life. She stands, in her odd macabre way, for a large group of James's characters whose desire for life overreaches itself in the extremities of immaturity and inexperience, and her great age only gives lurid point to the double charge. There is Rebecca, the most attractive of the old sisters, for whom the deprivation of life means literal death. Finally, there is Maria, who will stay on in the old house outside Boston to take her place at last as a symbol of life-in-death in her turn.

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James is the first great American novelist to have been consciously and explicitly concerned with "life" in the way that D. H. Lawrence, for example, was concerned with it. But to say this is to point, paradoxically, to the impassable abyss that separates them. We are not so much faced with a radical difference between two sensibilities (though there is certainly that) as with a radical difference between two traditions. Lawrence "treated" life; it was for him the native, natural subject matter, the raw material that was simply there. But in the abstract, intellectualizing, democratic, American tradition, filled with disembodied ideas and aspirations, and empty of the concrete, man-soiled evidences of a living humanity, the first problem was to say what life was. In such a tradition it is hardly remarkable that the artist, like the theologian proving God's existence, arrived at his positive concept by saying what life was not. James's art is deeply concerned with life, but, confronted with such a problem, "life" in his fictions often ends up with a negative look. Among the major characters in his work, where is there one to whom we can point as having realized "life" in larger terms than those supplied by a more deeply sensitized consciousnessness of the possibilities and values of an experience from which he is usually excluded? Strether, who may be taken as James's ultimate portrayal of the American who has discovered life in Europe, discovers it only to make sure that he keeps nothing for himself. His discovery enables him only to renounce more largely, and on the level of practical living it is difficult to see how his final plight is much better than Bernard Longmore's. James's finest female character (apart from little Maisie), Isabel Archer, relates to Strether in these respects. The fuller life she finds in Europe is a matter of refining her consciousness by an ordeal of fire. If, in the end, she registers more finely, she is left with nothing to register but a life of wretchedness and emotional frustration. The best that James's Americans can do for themselves is to look for a moment at the young artist and his sweetheart in the French inn yard, and deeply recognize that life lies *there*. It is the moment in the rose garden recollected through a life of democratic abstraction and Puritan deprivation.

But this must not be construed as criticism of James. It is only a recognition of the character of his particular problem. I do not like critics who attack James for having "failed" to treat life, for being sensuously thin, or for not dealing, in more blatant terms, with sexual love. These are the people who mistake the smell of the

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manured field for the harvested crop. James's fictions are the record of men and women, bleakly deprived through their Puritan, democratic, and American traditions of much that constitutes life for the European artist, searching for means to satisfy their spiritual and emotional needs without sacrificing what good they already possess, and which Europe cannot provide. It is a search for life, but it is a search in which, by the nature of the case, most are bound to fail. It was only a single couple, after all, that Hawthorne permitted to glimpse the Great Carbuncle, although many began the search. And even for that couple, the vision of the mystic jewel forced them to recognize that the reality they sought was in their own hearts. Europe is a symbol that acts in James's fictions rather like Hawthorne's Great Carbuncle. It shows everybody up for what they really are. In the end, those characters discover life who look for it in themselves, and in this sense Strether and Isabel find it. But it is not a version of "life" which everyone will find refreshing.

This is not James's fault. Life does not exist in a vacuum. It may be "the force that through the green fuse drives the flower," but there has to be a pre-existent pattern of petals for it to actualize, and through which its radiance can glow greenly as the animating impulse sustained through a protracted creative moment. Such conventions as the American tradition could claim tended towards abstraction and speculativeness. Their direction was democratic and levelling, or puritan and repressive. The life of the senses contributed almost nothing, and in such a tradition love between the sexes is handled with a good deal of embarrassment. For the artist intent on treating "life," as James was, the American scene yielded few places for its cultivation. When the American artist dealt with it successfully, it was in the primitive wilderness, on a raft in the Mississippi, or on a whaling boat in the Pacific, and James could not have been at home in any of these places.

James had to find a theme which would make life accessible to "treatment" in the American world that was inevitably his subject, and with the impoverished materials at hand his great theme became that of deprivation—deprivation of life. And in James the theme *is* a great one because he knew what life was, and what his characters were being deprived of. He not only measured exactly their terrible loss, he understood as well the conditions that foredoomed them to suffer. The situation produces a paradox that sometimes gets out of hand. If, in the midst of all this deprivation,

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James wishes to suggest life, he has to present it as the positive focus of predominantly negative forces. He has to point, at times unbelievably, to a victory of life over losses and deprivations that may impress the reader as nearly insuperable. One doesn't have to be unduly cynical to ask sometimes if James really expects a phoenix to rise out of such ashes as he gives us. And sometimes a phoenix doesn't. "A Round of Visits," 1910, and "Crapy Cornelia," 1909, are two examples of such failures.

"A Round of Visits" is concerned with the subject of spiritual metamorphosis. Newton Winch, who had once been a vulgarian and a rowdy at college, is encountered some years later by a former classmate of his, Mark Monteith, who in the old days had made a point of giving the insensitive Winch a wide berth. Monteith becomes aware almost immediately that during the interval some inexplicable process of refinement has occurred in Winch:

> These facts were as nothing, however, in presence of his quick and strong impression that his pale, nervous, smiling, clean-shaven host had undergone since their last meeting some extraordinary process of refinement. He had been ill, unmistakably, and the effects of a plunge into clean plain living, where any fineness had remained, were often startling, sometimes almost charming. But independently of this, and for a much longer time, some principle of intelligence, some art of life, would discernibly have worked in him. Remembered from college years and from those two or three luckless and faithless ones of the Law School as constitutionally common, as consistently and thereby doubtlessly even rather powerfully coarse, clever only for uncouth and questionable things, he yet presented himself now as if he had suddenly and mysteriously been educated. There was a charm in his wide, "drawn," convalescent smile, in the way his fine fingers—had he anything like fine fingers of old?—played, and just fidgeted, over the prompt and perhaps a trifle incoherent offer of cigars, cordials, ash-trays, over the question of the visitor's hat, stick, fur coat, general best accommodation and ease; and how the deuce, accordingly, had charm, for coming out so on top, Mark wondered, "squared" the other elements? For the short interval so to have dealt with him what force had it turned on, what patented process, of the portentous New York order in which there were so many, had it skilfully applied?

A straightforward and natural reading of this story leaves us with the interesting and significant question of what had happened to Winch to make him so much more intensely alive, refined, and intelligent, than he had been once. It is possible to bring deviously subtle interpretations to one's reading of this story, but James's

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answer is categorical and blunt enough. Newton Winch has become a swindler and has been "refined" by his dishonesty. Literature is filled with charming rogues whose shady vocations sometimes seem to be offered as a badge of life. It is the way of things that it should be Autolycus, the vital cut-purse, who sings, " . . the red blood reigns in the winter's pale." But it is surely a little unusual to have embezzlement recommended to us as "an art of life" and "a principle of intelligence" capable of performing the metamorphosis we are shown in Newton Winch. And yet this is essentially what James does. Larceny is the convention he uses here to reveal life. It leaves one asking if it is the result of simple perversity on James's part, or if the "deprived condition" of James's Americans is really so great that he is forced to coax a victory of life out of such an unpromising situation.

"Crapy Cornelia" might be treated as one of James's economic stories, for it was written after his last trip to America when his deepest economic recognitions were made. The handsome and rich widow, Mrs. Worthingham, to whom the hero White-Mason considers proposing in a reckless moment, has acquired a well-oiled ease of manner and an imperturbable assurance along with her recent acquisition of wealth. She is the representative of the new moneyed New York as opposed to the old social New York (about both of which Edith Wharton knew more than Henry James ever did), and she is well done. As a negative symbol of his values and his sense of life, James handles her with great control. By a number of deft touches James causes Mrs. Worthingham to embody all the anti-values that spelled out sterility and desiccation for him in early twentieth century America. She stands, though a little more softly, for the world that Undine Spragg took by conquest in Edith Wharton's superb novel, *The Custom of the Country*. By the indirections Mrs. Worthingham offers, the reader discovers the directions of James's values, and one wishes he had left it at that. But Cornelia Rasch, the "Crapy" of the story's title, appears at Mrs. Worthingham's one day when White-Mason has called. She and White-Mason have known each other in "the old days," but have not met for ten years. In the gilded opulence of Mrs. Worthingham's Louis Quinze drawing-room, the two mutually recognize themselves as "conscious, ironic, pathetic survivors together of a dead and buried society." It is when James endeavours to give us his positive values straight that the story breaks down. Crapy Cornelia is not a suitable

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figure to embody any vigorous conception or tradition of life, either present or remembered. James unintentionally leaves the question open of how significantly or truthfully she ever represented the vanished world she mourns. White-Mason says to her:

> "But we can't afford at this time of day not to help each other to have had—well, everything there was, since there's no more of it now, nor any way of coming by it *except so;* and therefore let us make together, let us make over and recreate, our lost world; for which we have after all and at the worst such a lot of material. You were in particular my dear sisters' friend—they thought you the funniest little brown thing possible; so isn't that again to the good? You were mine only to the extent that you were so much in and out of the house—as how much, if we come to that, wasn't one in and out, south of Thirtieth Street and north of Washington Square, in those days, those spacious, sociable, Arcadian days, that we flattered ourselves we filled with the modern fever, but that were so different from any of these arrangements of pretended hourly Time that dash themselves forever to pieces as from the fiftieth floor of skyscrapers."

Crapy Cornelia is not sufficiently realized in this story to enable her to carry those values of life and society James would endow her with. At best she is a tenderly rendered Miss Prism. One knows of course the values James was aimimg at, and in any case the reference to "those spacious, sociable, Arcadian days" provides the clue. It carries us back to Chapter III of *The Europeans*, in which Felix describes the home of the Wentworths to his sister, the Baroness, when he returns to their Boston hotel after his first visit with their American relatives:

> "Is it handsome—is it elegant?" asked the Baroness.
>
> Felix looked at her a moment, smiling. "It's very clean. No splendours, no gilding, no troops of servants; rather straight-backed chairs. But you might eat off the floors, and you can sit on the stairs."
>
> "That must be a privilege. And the inhabitants are straight-backed too, of course."
>
> "My dear sister," said Felix, "the inhabitants are charming."
>
> "In what style?"
>
> "In a style of their own. How shall I describe it? It's primitive; it's patriarchal; it's the *ton* of the golden age."
>
> "And have they nothing golden but their *ton*? Are there no symptoms of wealth?"
>
> "I should say there was wealth without symptoms. A plain, homely way of life; nothing for show, and very little for—what shall I call it?—for the senses; but a great *aisance*, and a lot of money, out of sight, that comes forward very quietly for subscriptions to institutions, for repair-

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ing tenements, for paying doctors' bills; perhaps even for portioning daughters."

In *The Europeans* James is able to realize these American values in the novel he is writing: there is no question of his simply telling us about them. The sureness of this realization largely depends on his having the help, through the persons of Felix and his sister, the Baroness, of a set of essentially European conventions and attitudes with which to define American values, and give them life. In the passage just quoted, the strength and positiveness of the simple New England virtues are rendered for us by the implicit cynicism and the quite explicit sophistication of the Baroness's pointed questions to Felix. And the spontaneous appreciation and warmth of Felix's answers are essentially those of a foreigner. He brings a detachment and a perspective that one would scarcely find in a native. Finally, James arrives at his final statement through a true dialectical process in which the European and the American values supplement each other. Even the stiffly Bostonian father seems spiritually enlarged by his younger daughter's marriage to Felix.

It is not extraordinary that James should have named his early novel in which he so positively rendered the American values that represent life, *The Europeans*. Without his European visitors James would hardly have known how to transpose that life, with its *ton* of the golden age, significantly into his art. It was too disembodied, too much a thing of the mind and too little a thing of the senses, too stripped of manners and sophisticated conventions, to be reproduced convincingly without the help that the Baroness and her delightful brother could bring from abroad.

A comparison between "Crapy Cornelia" and *The Europeans* indicates how necessary it was for James to approach his American values obliquely, by way of the European tradition, in terms of which his insights were deeper and shrewder, his point of view more richly suggestive. Without the help of that, we are left face to face with such embarrassing "cases" as Crapy Cornelia and Newton Winch, and although James seems to have believed that they somehow embodied life, it is a conviction he is unable to communicate in terms of his art. The two later stories suggest how thin the unadorned American tradition could be for the novelist of manners who, in a given instance, might wish to eschew the assistance of the Old World in trying to give us the values of the New.

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JAMES MERRILL

Marsyas

I used to write in the café sometimes:
Poems on menus, read all over town
Or talked out before ever written down.
One day a girl brought in his latest book.
I opened it—stiff rhythms, gorgeous rhymes—
And made a face. Then crash! my cup upset.
Of twenty upward looks mine only met
His, that gold archaic lion's look

Wherein I saw my wiry person skinned
Of every skill it labored to acquire
And heard the plucked nerve's elemental twang.
They found me dangling where his golden wind
Inflicted so much music on the lyre
That no one could have told you what he sang.

The Locusts

The plain dries outward from its heart.
The wise flat-bottomed clouds depart
With all their secrets. Green and gold
The land still tries to look controlled,
But one leaf panics. It will start

Now. A chirring numbs the air.
Live shrouds abruptly from nowhere
Fill up the failing streams like dirt.
Each tree puts on a dull brown shirt
And slumps, bowed down with care.

You think first: This is no rain
Of locusts, rather my own brain
At work, whose preconceptions dye
The whole world drab. Or bluntly: I
Am dreaming, or insane.

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The next day dawns upon no dream.
There is wide evidence of Them,
Such as the myriad dead or maimed
In furrows, in that yet unnamed
Trickle of corpses, once a stream.

Step gingerly—for they were real,
The locusts, after all.
Wearing opaque goggles (proof
Of a vestigial inner life?)
They have the dead hue of the useful,

The weak husk of no great event.
You feel nothing. It is time you went
Back to where everything was clear,
Where trouble was a limpid source to peer
Deep into, heaven-sent

Mirrorscape, green, wet,
All echo, orchid, and egret
In pure transports recalling you.
Go. A young man before you do
Is apt to roll a cigarette

And talk. Come spring (he says)
The grubs will hatch from crevices
To eat up anything that may have bloomed.
How strange, with all of it foredoomed,
His caring for that scant green is!

What can be said to him? The glue
Of dead wings thickens on your shoe.
Indeed, only when far behind
Does the experience make a kind
Of weird sense. One night over the bayou

Certain great clouds you have seen before
Move in, give way to a downpour.
They have been told at last, it seems,
About the flayed trees and the choked streams.
Rain wakes you, pounding on the door.

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PARIS LEARY

Clint Needham, on Sabbatical

Odyssean tourist, the expatriate
pro tem, Argos furnished by Cunard,
one pregnant Circe left at home to wait,

you plan to live in Florence, study hard,
and do a doctor's thesis on James Joyce,
all ready to the thousandth filing-card.

You have a gentle Oklahoma voice
not entirely nasal, allergy
to olives, and you do not mess with boys.

Generous to a fault, all energy,
well-groomed, twenty-nine, and Protestant,
you like almost the whole of Italy

except for the Italians, who all want
your money or, sometimes, nothing—which seems worse.
Do you know what makes the cripple, sycophant,

the hungry crone who flatters with a curse,
the beggar, or the corny prostitute
with 'sick mother' to support or nurse,

refuse your offers sometimes with a mute
dignity?—or what they keep intact
which makes so many choose, though destitute,

not to choose? It is the purest act
in poverty by which the human thing
transforms its myth of soul into a fact.

Go home, Clint Needham, home, for there is nothing
here to learn, nothing to be seen
which you could understand; for what could bring

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you closer to yourself and what you mean
is still too far away for you to seek,
and you can only give what you have been.

But go unhurt, for you are neither weak
nor strong, nor bad, nor good, you do not give
offense, the formal cause is more oblique—

you are too far from death to be alive.

Dry-Stone

In long cold light lean with purity
the lemon sun anneals the dry-stone wall.
The wind in planes and panels cannot shake
the stones which wear away before they break.
Yet no mortar seals them, nothing at all
holds them together in such nicety—
except the bitter skill that human hand
begrudged to claim an unresponsive land.

Clean with wind, and bent where the earth is bent,
the walls are grimly perfect, and the bridges
arch uncompromisingly their grey
parable of ruthless craft, today
lost among the dry and frozen ridges
like the art of building walls without cement:
the art of building lives without regard
for weakness, love, compassion, or reward.

The men who built these walls took wife and field
for the same need, fertility and food,
and both they plowed and sowed until they ceased
to bear and one of them, the land at least,
was left to rest. They made a house of wood
for God, a Protestant who did not yield
to supplication, though his laws of stone
claimed he was wholly good and good alone.

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They saved their money, paid their taxes, sent
their sons to die in wars, and all without
knowledge, pity, grace, or admiration
for the land they left these stone memorials on,
a land which never bore them faith or doubt.
Their labours now are but impediment
to straying cattle; and a winter sun
hardens the earth they bought but never won.

The newer fences, further on ahead,
made of wood or wire, are somehow better—
they warp and rust and sometimes fall apart,
weaker than dry-stone, and not an art.
Strength only lays the stone, then is its debtor,
and the earth consumes the strength which once it fed.
Weakness sows its love without a fence
and makes an art out of impermanence.

The Fear Passes by the Settled Mind

The fear passes by the settled mind
where conscience offers tea to Mrs Grundy;
the will, tight with the turn of another Sunday,
scarcely notes it passing by behind.
The sense of humour whistles in the dark,
its hands wetly nervous in its pockets.
The glands are snug in their familiar sockets,
too sleepy to take notice of, to mark.
The fear slips past the pickets in the senses,
pronouncing with a lisp the secret word,
passes on quickly, unseen, unheard,
to undo the emotions' reticences;
detects the blood and swims the unwilling stream,—
and comes to the surface, finally, in the scream.

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W. D. SNODGRASS

A Rocking-Horse: The Symbol, the Pattern, the Way to Live

"Daddy! Daddy!" he cried to his father. "Daddy, look what they are doing! Daddy, they're beating the poor little horse!"

—Crime and Punishment

"The Rocking-Horse Winner" seems the perfect story by the least meticulous of serious writers. It has been anthologized, analyzed by New Critics and force-fed to innumerable undergraduates. J. Arthur Rank has filmed it. Yet no one has seriously investigated the story's chief structural feature, the symbolic extensions of the rocking-horse itself, and I feel that in ignoring several meaning-areas of this story we ignore some of Lawrence's most stimulating thought.

Though the reach of the symbol is overwhelming, in some sense the story is "about" its literal, narrative level: the life of the family that chooses money instead of some more stable value, that takes money as its nexus of affection. The first fault apparently lay with the mother. The story opens:

> There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck. She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not love them . . . at the center of her heart was a hard little place that could not feel love, not for anybody.

We never learn much more about her problems, about *why* her love turned dust. But the rhyming verb "thrust" is shrewdly chosen and placed; knowing Lawrence, we may well guess that Hester's dissatisfaction is, at least in large part, sexual. We needn't say that the sexual factor is the sole or even primary cause of her frigidity, but it is usually a major expression and index of it, and becomes causal. Lawrence wrote in an amazing letter to John Middleton Murry:

> A woman unsatisfied must have luxuries. But a woman who loves a man would sleep on a board . . You've tried to satisfy Katherine with what you could earn for her, give her: and she will only be satisfied with what you *are*.

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There could scarcely be a more apt description of Hester's situation. As for her husband, we cannot even guess what he *is*; he gives too few clues. Failing to supply the luxuries that both he and his wife demand, he has withdrawn, ceased to exist. The one thing he could always give—himself, the person he is—seems part of a discarded currency. The mother, the father, finally the boy, each in turn has withdrawn his vital emotions and affections from commitment in and to the family. Withdrawing, they have denied their own needs, the one thing that could be "known" and "sure." They have, instead, committed their lives to an external, money, and so to "luck," since all externals are finally beyond control and cannot be really known. Thus, it is Paul's attempt to bring an external into his control by knowledge which destroys him. It is a failure of definition.

The father's withdrawal, of course, leaves a gap which encourages Paul in a natural Oedipal urge to replace him. And money becomes the medium of that replacement. So the money in the story must be taken literally, but is also a symbolic substitute for love and affection (since it has that meaning to the characters themselves), and ultimately for sperm. We know that money is not, to Paul, a good in itself—it is only a way to win his mother's affection, "compel her attention," show her that *he* is lucky though his father is not. That money has no real use for Hester either, becomes only too clear in that crucial scene where Paul sends her the birthday present of five thousand pounds hoping to alleviate her problems, relax the household, and so release her affections. His present only makes her colder, harder, more luxurious, and:

> the voices in the house, behind the sprays of mimosa and almond blossom, and from under the piles of iridescent cushions, simply trilled and screamed in a sort of ecstasy: "There *must* be more money! Oh-h-h; there *must* be more money. Oh, now, now-w! Now-w-w—there must be more money;—more than ever!"

The mother and father have driven themselves to provide the mother with what she, actually, needs least. And she has squandered it, one would guess, precisely to show her scorn for it and for the husband who provides it. Money as a symbolic substitute has only sharpened the craving it was meant to satisfy; the family has set up a vicious circle which will finally close upon Paul.

As several critics have noted, the story resembles many well-known fairy tales or magical stories in which the hero bargains with evil powers for personal advantages or forbidden knowledge. These

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bargains are always "rigged" so that the hero, after his apparent triumphs, will lose in the end—this being, in itself, the standard "moral." Gordon and Tate sum up their interpretation: "the boy, Paul, has invoked strange gods and pays the penalty with his death." Robert Gorham Davis goes on to point out that many witches supposedly rode hobby-horses of one sort or another (e.g., the witch's broom) to rock themselves into a magical and prophetic trance. When he rides, Paul's eyes glare blue and strange, he will speak to no one, his sisters fear him. He stares into the horse's wooden face: "Its red mouth was slightly open, its big eye was wide and glassy-bright." More and more engrossed in his doom as the story progresses, he becomes "wild-eyed and strange . . . his big blue eyes blazing with a sort of madness." We hear again and again of the uncanny blaze of his eyes until finally, at his collapse, they are "like blue stones." Clearly enough, he is held in some self-induced prophetic frenzy, a line of meaning carefully developed by the story. When Paul first asserts to his mother that he is "lucky," he claims that God told him so. This seems pure invention, yet may well be a kind of *hubris*, considering the conversation that had just passed with his mother:

> "Nobody ever knows why one person is lucky and another unlucky."
> "Don't they? Nobody at all? Does nobody know?"
> "Perhaps God. But He never tells."

Whether Paul really believes that God told him so, he certainly does become lucky. And others come to believe that superhuman powers are involved. Bassett thinks of "Master Paul" as a seer and takes an explicitly worshipful tone towards him. He grows "serious as a church" and twice tells Uncle Oscar in a "secret, religious voice . . . . 'It's as if he had it from heaven.' " These hints of occultism culminate in Uncle Oscar's benediction:

> "My God, Hester, you're eighty-odd thousand to the good, and a poor devil of a son to the bad. But poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner."

So, in some sense, Paul *is* demonic, yet a poor devil; though he has compacted with evil, his intentions were good and he has destroyed only himself. At first metaphorically, in the end literally, he has committed suicide. But that may be, finally, the essence of evil.

It is clear, then, that the story is talking about some sort of

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religious perversion. But *what* sort? Who are the strange gods: how does Paul serve them and receive their information? We must return here, I think, to the problem of knowledge and intellection. Paul is destroyed, we have said, by his desire to "know." It is not only that he has chosen wrong ways of knowing or wrong things to know. The evil is that he *has* chosen to know, to live by intellection. Lawrence wrote, in a letter to Ernest Collings:

> My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. *The intellect is only a bit and bridle.* What do I care about knowledge . . . I conceive a man's body as a kind of flame . . . and the intellect is just the light that is shed on to the things around . . . A flame isn't a flame because it lights up two, or twenty objects on a table. It's a flame because it is itself. And we have forgotten ourselves . . . The real way of living is to answer to one's wants. Not "I want to light up with my intelligence as many things as possible" but ". . . I want that liberty, I want that woman, I want that pound of peaches, I want to go to sleep, I want to go to the pub and have a good time, I want to look a beastly swell today, I want to kiss that girl, I want to insult that man."

(I have italicized the bit and bridle metaphor to underscore an immediate relationship to the rocking-horse of the story.)

Not one member of this family really knows his wants. Like most idealists, they have ignored the most important part of the command *Know thyself*, and so cannot deal with their most important problem, their own needs. To know one's needs is really to know one's own limits, hence one's definition. Lawrence's notion of living by "feeling" or "blood" (as opposed to "knowledge," "mind" or "personality") may be most easily understood, perhaps, as living according to what you *are*, not what you think you should be made over into; knowing yourself, not external standards. Thus, what Lawrence calls "feeling" could well be glossed as "knowing one's wants." Paul's family, lacking true knowledge of themselves, have turned their light, their intellect, outward, hoping to control the external world. The mother, refusing to clarify what her emotions really *are*, hopes to control herself and her world by acting "gentle and anxious for her children." She tries to be or act what she thinks she should be, not taking adequate notice of what she is and needs. She acts from precepts about motherhood, not from recognition of her own will, self-respect for her own motherhood. Thus, the apparent contradiction between Hester's coldness, the "hard . . .

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center of her heart," and, on the other hand, "all her tormented motherhood flooding upon her" when Paul collapses near the end of the story. Some deep source of affection has apparently lain hidden (and so tormented) in her, all along; it was her business to find and release it sooner. Similarly, Paul has a need for affection which he does not, and perhaps cannot, understand or manage. Like his mother, he is trying to cover this lack of self-knowledge with knowledge about the external world, which he hopes will bring him a fortune, and so affection.

Paul is, so, a symbol of civilized man, whipping himself on in a nervous endless "mechanical gallop," an "arrested prance," in chase of something which will destroy him if he ever catches it, and which he never really wanted anyway. He is the scientist, teacher, theorist, who must always know about the outside world so that he can manipulate it to what he believes is his advantage. Paradoxically, such knowledge comes to him only in isolation, in withdrawal from the physical world, so that his intellect may operate upon it unimpeded. And such control of the world as he can gain is useless because he has lost the knowledge of what he wants, what he is.

This, then, is another aspect of the general problem treated by the story. A still more specific form of withdrawal and domination is suggested by the names of the horses on which Paul bets. Those names—like the names of the characters—are a terrible temptation to ingenuity. One should certainly be wary of them. Yet two of them seem related to each other and strongly suggest another area into which the story's basic pattern extends. Paul's first winner, Singhalese, and his last, Malabar, have names which refer to British colonial regions of India. (A third name, Mirza, suggests "Mirzapur"—still another colonial region. But that is surely stretching things.) India is obviously one of the focal points of the modern disease of colonial empire; for years Malabar and Singhalese were winners for British stockholders and for the British people in general. The British, like any colonial power or large government or corporation, have gambled upon and tried to control peoples and materials which they never see and with which they never have any vital physical contacts. (Lawrence's essay "Men must Work and Women as Well" is significant here.) They have lived by the work of others, one of the chief evils of which is that their own physical energies have no outlet and are turned into dissatisfactions

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and pseudo-needs which must be filled with more and more luxuries. And so long as they "knew," placed their bets right, they were rich, were able to afford more and more dissatisfactions. A similar process destroyed Spain: a similar process destroyed Paul.

Though these last several areas of discussion are only tenuously present, most readers would agree, I think, that the rocking-horse reaches symbolically toward such meanings: into family economy and relations, into the occult, into the modern intellectual spirit, into the financial and imperial manipulations of the modern state. But surely the sexual area is more basic to the story—is, indeed, the basic area in which begins the pattern of living which the rocking-horse symbolizes. It is precisely this area of the story and its interpretation which has been ignored, perhaps intentionally, by other commentators. Oddly enough, Lawrence himself has left an almost complete gloss of this aspect of the story in his amazing, infuriating and brilliant article, "Pornography and Obscenity." There, Lawrence defines pornography not as art which stimulates sexual desire, but rather as art which contrives to make sex ugly (if only by excluding it) and so leads the observer away from sexual intercourse and toward masturbation. He continues:

> When the grey ones wail that the young man and young woman went and had sexual intercourse, they are bewailing the fact that the young man and the young woman didn't go separately and masturbate. Sex must go somewhere, especially in young people. So, in our glorious civilization, it goes in masturbation. And the mass of our popular literature, the bulk of our popular amusements just exists to provoke masturbation . . . The moral guardians who are prepared to censor all open and plain portrayal of sex must now be made to give their only justification: We prefer that the people shall masturbate.

Even a brief reading of the essay should convince one that Paul's mysterious ecstasy is not only religious, but sexual and onanistic. That is Paul's "secret of secrets." Just as the riding of a horse is an obvious symbol for the sex act, and "riding" was once the common sexual verb, so the rocking-horse stands for the child's imitation of the sex act, for the riding which goes nowhere.

We note in the passage quoted above that Lawrence thinks of masturbation chiefly as a substitute for some sort of intercourse. Similarly in the story:

> "Surely, you're too big for a rocking-horse!" his mother had remonstrated.

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> "Well, you see, mother, till I can have a *real* horse, I like to have some sort of animal about," had been his quaint answer.

This is one of several doctrinal points where the reader will likely disagree with Lawrence. Nonetheless, the idea was prevalent at the time of writing and is common enough today that most men probably still think of masturbation chiefly as a sex substitute. And like the money substitute mentioned before, it can only famish the craving it is thought to ease. So we find another area in which the characters of the story don't know what they need; another and narrower vicious circle.

The tightening of that circle, the destruction of Paul, is carefully defined; here, one feels both agreement with Lawrence's thought and a strong admiration for his delineation of the process:

> He went off by himself, vaguely, in a childish way, seeking for the clue to "luck." Absorbed, taking no heed of other people, he went about with a sort of stealth, seeking inwardly for luck.

Stealth becomes more and more a part of Paul. We hear again and again of his secret, his "secret within a secret," we hear his talk with Uncle Oscar:

> "I shouldn't like mother to know I was lucky," said the boy.
> "Why not, son?"
> "She'd stop me."
> "I don't think she would."
> "Oh!"—and the boy writhed in an odd way—"I *don't* want her to know, uncle."

We may quote here a passage from "Pornography and Obscenity":

> Masturbation is the one thoroughly secret act of the human being, more secret even than excrementation.

Naturally, any act accompanied by such stealth is damaging to the personality and to its view of itself. It involves an explicit denial of the self, a refusal to affirm the self and its acts (an imaginative suicide) and consequently a partial divorce from reality. But this is only part of that same general process of isolation. In the essay, Lawrence says:

> Most of the responses are dead, most of the awareness is dead, nearly all the constructive activity is dead, and all that remains is a sort of a shell, a half empty creature fatally self-preoccupied and incapable of either giving or taking . . . And this is masturbation's result. Enclosed within

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> the vicious circle of the self, with no vital contacts outside, the self becomes emptier and emptier, till it is almost a nullus, a nothingness.

And this is the process dramatized by the story. Paul draws back from his family, bit by bit, until he becomes strange and fearful to his sisters and will speak to no one, has grown beyond the nurse and has no real contact with his parents. Even Uncle Oscar feels uncomfortable around him. Finally he has moved his rocking-horse away from the family and taken it with him "to his own bedroom at the top of the house."

Lawrence believes that man's isolation is an unavoidable part of his definition as a human being—yet he needs all the contact he can possibly find. In his essay on Poe, Lawrence writes:

> Love is the mysterious vital attraction which draws things together, closer, closer together. For this reason sex is the actual crisis of love. For in sex the two blood-systems, in the male and female, concentrate and come into contact, the merest film intervening. Yet if the intervening film breaks down, it is death . . .
>
> In sensual love, it is the two blood-systems, the man's and the woman's, which sweep up into pure contact, and almost *fuse*. Almost mingle. Never quite. There is always the finest imaginable wall between the two blood waves, through which pass unknown vibrations, forces, but through which the blood itself must never break, or it means bleeding.

Sex, then, is man's closest link to other human beings and to the "unknown," his surest link into humanity, and it is this that Paul and his family have foresworn in their wilful isolation. And this isolation is more than physical. Again in "Pornography and Obscenity," we find:

> The great danger of masturbation lies in its merely exhaustive nature. In sexual intercourse, there is a give and take. A new stimulus enters as the native stimulus departs. Something quite new is added as the old surcharge is removed. And this is so in all sexual intercourse where two creatures are concerned, even in the homosexual intercourse. But in masturbation there is nothing but loss. There is no reciprocity. There is merely the spending away of a certain force, and no return. The body remains, in a sense, a corpse, after the act of self-abuse.

To what extent Lawrence thinks this reciprocity, this give and take, to be physical, I am not sure; I *am* sure it could easily be exaggerated. Lawrence makes a sharp distinction between the physical and the material. At any rate, it seems to me that the most

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important aspect of this sexual give-and-take is certainly emotional and psychological and that the stimulus which enters in sexual intercourse lies in coming to terms with an actual sexual partner who is real and in no wise "ideal." Thus, such a partner will afford both unexpectable pleasures and very real difficulties which must be recognized and overcome. But in masturbation these problems can be avoided. Most psychologists would agree that the most damaging thing about masturbation is that it is almost always accompanied by fantasy about intercourse with some "ideal" partner. Thus, one is led away from reality with its difficulties and unpredictable joys, into the self and its repetitive fantasies. This may seem rather far from the story, but I suggest that this explains the namelessness of the rocking-horse. (It also, of course, suggests shame and is valuable in manipulating the plot.) The real partner has a name which is always the same and stands for a certain configuration of personality with its quirks and glories; the fantasy partner, having no personality, has no name of his or her own but is given the name of such "real" partners as one might wish from week to week.

These, then, are the gods which Paul has invoked. This sexual problem gives, also, a startling range of irony to the religious texture of the story. The "secret within a secret . . . that which had no name" comes to be not only the shame of Paul's masturbation, but also a vicious and astounding parody of the "word within a word" . . . that which cannot be named. It should be clear from the material already quoted, and even more so from a reading of "Pornography and Obscenity," that it is popular religion, Christian idealism, that Lawrence is attacking, for it supports the "purity lie" and leaves masturbation as the only sexual expression, even at times openly condoning it. The strange gods are the familiar ones; the occult heresy is popular Christian piety.

It is not clear, however, how Paul receives knowledge from his onanistic gods. Lawrence himself does not pretend to know *how* this comes about, he only knows that it does exist:

> The only positive effect of masturbation is that it seems to release a certain mental energy, in some people. But it is mental energy which manifests itself always in the same way, in a vicious circle of analysis and impotent criticism, or else a vicious circle of false and easy sympathy, sentimentalities. This sentimentalism and the niggling analysis, often self-analysis, of most of our modern literature, is a sign of self-abuse.

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This momentary release of energy is, I take it, equivalent to finding the name of the "winner" in the story. Thus the two great meaning streams of the story, intellection and masturbation, relate. Masturbation stands as the primary area: the withdrawal and stealth, the intellectual participation in the physical, the need to know and magically control the external, the driving of the self into a rigid, "mechanical gallop," the displacement of motive, the whole rejection of self, all begins here. And the pattern, once established, spreads, gradually infecting all the areas of life, familial, economic, political, religious. Here, again, the reader may feel a doctrinal disagreement, suspecting that masturbation is more symptomatic than causal. Such disagreement scarcely touches the story, however, whose business is not to diagnose or cure, but to create a vision of life, which it does with both scope and courage.

I want to quote finally, one more passage from the essay "Pornography and Obscenity" to round off the argument and tie up some loose ends, and also simply because of its value, its sincerity. It is a kind of summation of the story's meaning and opens with a sentence roughly equivalent to Uncle Oscar's judgment, "he's best gone out of a life where he rides a rocking-horse to find a winner":

> If my life is merely to go on in a vicious circle of self-enclosure, masturbating self-consciousness, it is worth nothing to me. If my individual life is to be enclosed within the huge corrupt lie of society today, purity and the dirty little secret, then it is worth not much to me. Freedom is a very great reality. But it means, above all things, freedom from lies. It is, first, freedom from myself; from the lie of my all-importance, even to myself; it is freedom from the self-conscious masturbating thing I am, self-enclosed. And second, freedom from the vast lie of the social world, the lie of purity and the dirty little secret. All the other monstrous lies lurk under the cloak of this one primary lie. The monstrous lie of money lurks under the cloak of purity. Kill the purity-lie and the money-lie will be defenseless.
>
> We have to be sufficiently conscious, and self-conscious, to know our own limits and to be aware of the greater urge within us and beyond us. Then we cease to be primarily interested in ourselves. Then we learn to leave ourselves alone, in all the affective centres: not to force our feelings in any way, and never to force our sex. Then we make the great onslaught on the outside lie, the inside lie being settled. And that is freedom and the fight for freedom.

There are few more courageous statements in our literature.

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MONROE ENGEL

The Continuity of Lawrence's Short Novels

LAWRENCE'S SHORT NOVELS are a special and sustained achievement belonging roughly to the last decade of his life. It is of course not clear at precisely what point the long story becomes the short novel, but with *The Fox* (1918-19; revised and lengthened in 1921), not only does Lawrence write a story that is appreciably longer than his earlier stories (about three times the length of "The Prussian Officer," for example), but he establishes certain themes—and, more peculiarly, certain patterns and devices for vivifying these themes—that become generic for his longer stories.

The Fox is written in a markedly objective style verging on irony, or a kind of satire with only the mutest comedy. The elastic fluency of the style also allows direct seriousness, even earnestness. The opening pages describe a peculiar state of disorder suggested by the facts that the two girls in the story are known by their surnames; that March, who had "learned carpentry and joinery at the evening classes in Islington," was "the man about the place;" and that on the farm, nothing prospers: the heifer gets through the fences, and the girls sell the cow—not insignificantly—just before it is to calf, "afraid of the coming event." The fowls are drowsy in the morning, but stay up half the night; and the fox carries them off at will. All in all, the girls "were living on their losses, as Banford said," and they acquired a "low opinion of Nature altogether."

This detailing of disorder is perhaps overdone, labored, and some other elements in the story seem too insisted on also—a kind of heaviness from which the subsequent short novels do not suffer. For March—who is obviously from the first the more restive and saveable of the two girls—the fox represents an escape from her present deadening life, an escape conceived in increasingly sexual terms. "Her heart beats to the fox," she is "possessed by him." Then, when the young man appears, he is at once seen in foxy terms. He has "a ruddy, roundish face, with fairish hair, rather long, flattened to his forehead with sweat. His eyes were blue, and

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very bright and sharp. On his cheeks, on the fresh ruddy skin, were fine, fair hairs, like a down but sharper. It gave him a slightly glistening look." And he is the fabulous fox as well as the natural one, the sly predatory Reynard, for "Having his heavy sack on his shoulders, he stooped, thrusting his head forward. His hat was loose in one hand."

Most of the time though, the analogy is to the natural fox. The analogy is intentionally overt from the beginning. Lawrence says of the boy that "to March he was the fox;" and once March says to him, "I thought you were the fox." The effect then comes not from a hidden analogy suddenly bursting on the reader's consciousness with the force of discovery, but from the detailed accumulation of the analogy, supported by Lawrence's genius for the description of nature and animals.

The analogy, and March's sexual dream of the fox, are such that we quite accept the remark, late in the story, that March's upper lip lifts "away from her two white, front teeth, with a curious, almost rabbit-look . . . . that helpless fascinated rabbit-look." And accept too the serious weight of sexual implication when she examines the dead fox, and to her hand "his wonderful black glinted brush was full and frictional, wonderful."

The boy's fox-likeness matters—given Lawrence's beliefs—in ways other than simply his vital quickness, or his sexual splendor. There is also "always . . . the same ruddy, self-contained look on his face, as though he were keeping himself to himself." The essential concerns in this story are more nearly simply sexual than in the later ones, but even here this self-contained boy says: "If I marry, I want to feel it's for all my life." And part of his claim to March is that there can be more permanence for her in a relationship with him than in one with Banford. The permanent marriage of two self-contained people is close to Lawrence's ideal.

For of course here as elsewhere, Lawrence is trying to render imaginatively what the relationship between the sexes is and might be, and the contest—between the boy and Banford—for March, is a contest that appears repeatedly, though in various guises, in Lawrence's work: a contest in which the new kind of lover must win the still neutral beloved from the claims of the old kind of love. Banford and March are held together by the old kind of love. Whether that love is also abnormal, is largely beside the point. It is not simply that March encases her soft flesh in manly dress for Ban-

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ford, and shows it in female dress for the boy Henry—though this simple device has enormous and, once more, overt effect in the story. It is rather that March feels responsible for Banford's health and happiness and well-being, and feels safe and sane with her. Sanity and over-responsibility are the marks, in all the short novels, of the old love. It was from these self-destroying feelings that March "wanted the boy to save her."

With Henry—who kills Banford to free March for himself—she feels something else. The story is at its weakest in these final pages, expanded in Lawrence's 1921 revision, which attempt to get at what the nature of the new kind of relationship between man and woman will be. Lawrence, who wished to write social and prescriptive fiction, felt a responsibility to substantiate the better world he preached. A similar impulse and failure can be found in the final act of *Prometheus Unbound*. Each of Lawrence's short novels has this kind of visionary finale, but they become increasingly successful.

The Captain's Doll (1921) is in a similarly objective style, with the author detached even from the proponents of his thesis. But there is less bent of irony this time than of wonder, for *The Captain's Doll* is peculiarly a story about beauty. Again, the meaningful working of the story depends on an overt analogy—between Captain Hepburn and the doll portrait that Hannele makes of him, but doesn't make him into. For this time the analogy is a kind of anti-analogy—the doll is what Captain Hepburn must not become: "any *woman*, to-day," the Captain says, "no matter *how* much she loves her man—she could start any minute and make a doll of him. And the doll would be her hero; and her hero would be no more than her doll."

All these short novels make heavy use of analogy. This is the only one, however, in which the analogy is to an inanimate object, and the inanimate fixedness of the doll limits its range of usefulness. The use it has, though, is exact and startling, and is at least inherent in the first unseemly appearance of the doll, flourishing head downwards.

Again, as in *The Fox*, the story starts with disordered relationships, and the action concerns the choice a neutral person, Hannele, must make between conventional love and a new kind of relationship. But the choice as posed here is more complicated and rich than in *The Fox*. For one thing, conventional love is given formidable and deeply attractive proponents in Mitchka, the Regierungs-

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rat, and Mrs. Hepburn, who has, in her husband's account of her at least, a quality of out-of-the-world or primitive magic that will recur in the subsequent short novels as a quality reserved for certain adherents of the new order only. Also, the new kind of relationship is suggested more exactly and coherently in *The Captain's Doll* than it was in *The Fox*, and is less simply sexual.

The dramatic acceptability of the doctrine in this story depends on its being given dramatic validity, rather than being merely sermonized as at the end of *The Fox*. It comes too from the substantial impressiveness of Hepburn as a character, and from his and the author's nearly painful sense of the pull and attractions of the old ways, and particularly of the mortal painfulness of beauty. And on the lake, at the very end of the story, we even get a flash of what the life of Hepburn and Hannele may be together, united in this new kind of marriage.

In *The Ladybird* (1921-22), Lawrence told Middleton Murry he had "the quick of a new thing." The "quick" lies chiefly in the character of the Bohemian Count Dionys, who is a resurrected man in a more intellectual, varied, and charming way than Hepburn. Dionys, of course, is purposefully named; but he is the magic Pan, not the vulgar Bacchus.

Again the objective style verges on irony, but this time it is a grave kind of irony, as seen in the opening description of Lady Beveridge. The style is subtle, the exact weight of meaning unfixed. Nothing but such complex fluency of style could make the scenes between Daphne and Count Dionys—and particularly the climactic scene in Count Dionys' bedroom—convincing, and free from any air of the ludicrous.

Again—as in the two previous stories—there is a contest for the neutral soul: the soul of Lady Daphne. But the forces in this contest are not in each case single figures. Lady Beveridge and Basil are a team—the fully civilized or naturally repressed characters, bound to the old civilized kind of selfless love. This is in contrast to Lord Beveridge and Lady Daphne, who are *un*naturally repressed. Repressed, that is, in opposition to their own natures. With Lord Beveridge, the repression is nearly final, despite his choleric intransigence and personal integrity. But with Daphne it is not yet final. Even her body cannot accept it, is in disorder, as shown by the tendency to tuberculosis from which she suffers when under stress—a tendency, of course, that Lawrence also had, and which he seems

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often to have attributed to social causes, to his inability to find a healthy moral atmosphere in which to live. The character who has thrown off civilized repression, the other principal in the contest, is of course Count Dionys.

Perhaps the most remarkable scene in the active contest is the long debate on love between Count Dionys and Basil, the champion of conventional love, who has told Daphne that his love for her now is a sacrament, and that he considers himself an eager sacrifice to her, and could happily die on her altar. These champions of different attitudes toward love carry on their debate with Daphne sitting between them, finding it "curious that while her sympathy . . . was with the Count, it was her husband whose words she believed to be true." So the schism between her mind, educated to repression, and that other part of her which suffers under this repression, is made dramatically clear. It is an indication of the energy of the ideas and the fluency of the style, that this almost formal debate is always dramatic, never abstracted from the situation, and never tedious—even as is the nobly ludicrous debate between Hepburn and Hannele on the bus in *The Captain's Doll*.

Again animal analogy is important in the story—principally the ladybird analogy from which it gets its title. The ladybird, on the crest of Count Dionys' family, is, he thinks, a descendant of the Egyptian scarab. This leads to a deceptively casual and not quite open exchange:

> "Do you know Fabre?" put in Lord Beveridge. "He suggests that the beetle rolling a little ball of dung before him, in a dry old field, must have suggested to the Egyptians the First Principle that set the globe rolling. And so the scarab became the creative principle—or something like that."
>
> "That the earth is a tiny ball of dry dung is good," said Basil.
>
> "Between the claws of a ladybird," added Daphne.
>
> "That is what it is, to go back to one's origin," said Lady Beveridge.
>
> "Perhaps they meant that it was the principle of decomposition which first set the ball rolling," said the Count.
>
> "The ball would have to be *there* first," said Basil.
>
> "Certainly. But it hadn't started to roll. Then the principle of decomposition started it." The Count smiled as if it were a joke.
>
> "I am no Egyptologist," said Lady Beveridge, "so I can't judge."

The analogy between Count Dionys and this usefully destructive ladybird is admirably clear.

The place of magic—slight and off to one side in *The Captain's*

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Doll, and to the wrong side at that—is very important in *The Ladybird*. Not the occult theorizing about light and dark—recurrent in so much of Lawrence's fiction—but rather the magic that is conveyed by the songs in the story, the magic of personal power. When Daphne uses the Count's thimble, a German song occurs to her:

Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär
Und auch zwei Flüglein hätt'
Flög ich zu dir—

This is obviously a song of the ladybird, though in her conscious mind Daphne labels it a song of longing for her absent husband. And Daphne is finally brought to the Count—resolving the schism between her conscious and unconscious will—by the "old songs of his childhood" that he sings, an "intense peeping . . . like a witchcraft . . . a ventriloquist sound or a bat's uncanny peeping . . . inaudible to any one but herself . . . . It was like a thread which she followed out of the world."

Again the resurrection to a new way is not easy, not a trick, but a painful, chastening separation of the self from the accustomed world and—most painfully, and for Daphne particularly—from its surface beauties. Yet at the end of *The Ladybird*, the reader is convinced that he has glimpsed in Daphne and Dionys some special capacity possessed neither by the other characters in the story, nor by himself.

In *St. Mawr* (1924) the objective style is at times a style of high comedy, and particularly when Mrs. Witt is on scene. Again, of course, the story depends on a central analogy, stressed by the title, between a human being and an animal. But the horse St. Mawr defines Rico not by similarity but by contrast. In this way, the analogy is something like that in *The Captain's Doll*. Once more the analogy is entirely overt, and is suggested or anticipated well before the horse even appears, in a horsey description of Rico in the second paragraph. Rico is all fraudulent play, never the real thing (Mr. Leavis has pointed to the significance of his playing at being an artist). Even his sexuality is bogus. His marriage with Lou is "a marriage . . .without sex"; and so there is brutal irony in the circumstance that he wears a ring, sent him by a female admirer, bearing a "lovely intaglio of Priapus under an apple bough." What Lou requires—and Rico is not at all—is a Dionys,

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the Pan of the dinner table conversation with the painter Cartwright.

The only men in this story who are at all Pan-like are Phoenix and Lewis, the two grooms, and Phoenix doesn't quite make it either. Lewis, however, is the real thing. He and St. Mawr both avoid physical contact with women because—presumably, and as he says—modern women are incapable of the proper and necessary respect for their husbands. Again, part of the real creative accomplishment of the story is that it can make ideas and notions that we might resist or find absurd out of context, convincing and moving in context. This is particularly true of the long conversation between Lewis and Mrs. Witt during the cross country ride they take together to save St. Mawr. The ride culminates with Lewis's refusal of Mrs. Witt's offer of marriage; but before this offer, which ends all exchange between them, Lewis has shown himself another of the Lawrence characters endowed with other-worldly magic. Mrs. Witt, who in her relations with every other man she'd ever known had "conquered his country," feels that Lewis looks "at her as if from out of another country, a country of which he was an inhabitant, and where she had never been." And this magic property is given simpler demonstration by Lewis's naive, stubborn, but only partially credulous talk about falling-stars and ash-tree seeds and the people of the moon. When he sees a falling-star, Lewis thinks to himself: "*There's movement in the sky. The world is going to change again. They're throwing something to us from the distance, and we've got to have it, whether we want it or not.*"

St. Mawr is an ambitious story. In the disaster in which St. Mawr is disgraced, he is the figure of unrepressed man ridden by repressed man, Rico. The accident occurs, not fortuitously, when the horse shies at a dead snake. And—supporting the same suggestions—this precipitates for Lou an overwhelming vision of evil.[1]

The magic and visionary qualities emerging through all the preceding short novels, dominate the middle and end of *St. Mawr*. The very end—the description of the deserted mountain ranch in

[1] It might, incidentally, be interesting to compare Lou's vision on the expedition to the Devil's Chair, and Mrs. Witt's related lassitude toward the end of the story, with the enervating vision of Mrs. Moore in *Passage to India*, after her visit to the Malabar caves. In a letter to Middleton Murry written just after he had completed *St. Mawr*, Lawrence says: " . . . the *Passage to India* interested me very much . . . the repudiation of our white bunk is genuine, sincere, and pretty thorough, it seems to me. Negative, yes. But King Charles must have his head off. Homage to the headsman."

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the American Southwest—is a vision of the potential and possibility that Lawrence in his more optimistic thoughts about America considered it to possess. Lou Witt is not saved here, but is to be brought—possibly—to the condition that precedes any radically new life, a kind of exalted waiting, without sexuality or, really, any connection with other human beings. Lewis and St. Mawr—who has finally found his mate in a long-legged Texas mare: a touch that surely fails to add to the seriousness of the story—drop out before the end, and Phoenix, too, is in effect disposed of. The final pages—marred only at times by Lawrence's preachy vein—give an affecting picture of the beauty and effort of man's attempt to bring order into chaos. And we have here again the Shelleyan attempt to envision with some concreteness the condition abstractly prescribed.

The Man Who Died (1927) is entirely visionary and miraculous. Here the objective style is more formal, to help convey the quality of myth, and again analogy is important. At first Lawrence had called the story *The Escaped Cock*,—a title that accentuates the analogy, as do the titles of the other short novels. As usual, the overt import of the analogy requires no expounding.

The theme of the resurrected man (and the Pan-Christ) had occurred in several of the other short novels, in different degrees of importance. Dionys is a resurrected man, coming back to life after being near death, and after considering himself dead and wishing his death. So too is Captain Hepburn in *The Captain's Doll*. In *St. Mawr*, Lou Witt—writing to her mother—says she wishes no more marriages, and understands "why Jesus said: *Noli me tangere*. Touch me not, I am not yet ascended unto the Father . . . That is all my cry to all the world." And this, of course, is the repeated cry of the man who had died.

It is unnecessary, here, to outline Lawrence's sexual prescriptions. But clearly of great moment in this story are the reverential and respecting wonder between the man and the priestess, and that they know and need to know so little about each other, thus retaining a kind of inviolate personal integrity. Nor is anything like mere sexuality being invoked—not, for example, the slavish sexuality of the slaves. And once more, the extraordinary beauty of the narrative, often gratuitous to its immediate intent, prevents import from becoming anything so meagre as doctrine.

These stories have a richness and intricacy—purposeful, and

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also nearly accidental virtues—that summary cannot suggest. What should be suggested is the achievement not only of form—which often appears to be lacking in the long novels of the same period—but of something very close to formula. There is a bold repetition—often with increasing evidence of intention—of certain elements, principally: the objective and fluent style; analogy—generally animal analogy; disordered relationships; the opposition of traditional love and a new kind of relationship between the sexes, dramatized by a contest between these forces for a neutral beloved; the use of magic; and the visionary ending, associated with the emergent theme of resurrection, and given final importance in *The Man Who Died*. Altogether, these short novels constitute an extraordinary body of imaginatively realized thesis fiction.

In the short novels, Lawrence puts into practice some of the objectives he sets himself in the letter to Edward Garnett defending the early draft of *The Rainbow*, and objecting to the practice of the great traditional novelists of fitting all their characters into a moral scheme. This moral scheme is, he says, "whatever the extraordinariness of the characters themselves, dull, old, dead." For himself, he wants to get away from "the old stable ego of the character," and make the characters, instead, fall into "some other rhythmic form, as when one draws a fiddlebow across a fine tray delicately sanded, the sand takes lines unknown."

For reasons having to do largely with the implications of length, these more formal principles of characterization may be more peculiarly suited to the short novel than to the long. In *The Fox*, the attempt to break the tyranny of the moral scheme is still flagrant and crude. But in the short novels that follow—particularly beginning with *The Ladybird* and its "quick of a new thing"—ego in any conventional sense is no longer the spring of action. Characters act instead in an intricate formal pattern, vivifying and responding to a central concern. The extremity of Lawrence's views required highly formal expression to be in any way acceptable, and the artifice of these short novels is nearly as formal as ballet or ritual dance.

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WILDER BENTLEY

From Nature and Art to Society and Selfhood

Canons I, VII, VIII, X, XI, XIII, and XX from the T'ang

In the following poems the landscape theme, heretofore predominant, is subordinated to the humanistic themes favored by Po Chu-i. More specifically speaking, my previous Canons in The Hudson Review *have concerned themselves with the poem as landscape in which the painter-poet seeks the objectification of selfhood in nature through art. In this issue, however, my scene shifts from nature to society, and with China's greatest humanist poet, Po Chu-i, as my authority: he whose utterances have given this shift in point of view its richest poetic expression in the Far East. It is not mere happenstance that this transition took place during China's greatest period of cultural expansion. The seed of Japanese culture had already been sired by the sons of Han, but the offspring culture as it matured resembled its mother Yamoto more and more: Chinese abstraction gave way to Japanese particularization, the particularization of passion and its complementary dispassion. But the roots of this cultural transfusion have been constantly confused ever since Ernest Fenollosa introduced the West to the fine arts of the Far East with the publication of his* Epochs in Chinese and Japanese Art, *in which, as devotee to the offspring culture, he often mistakes the features of the sire for those of the mother. A similar ambiguity occurs in mistaking the Italianate Greek of the Humanists of the Cinquecento for pure Attic! If cross-pollination of cultures breeds confusion, however, we should not forget that it also gives rise to social regeneration. And since the Meiji is by the same token the critical period in which East-West cross-currents began, I have arbitrarily chosen one of the Late Tokugawa Sinologues and major poet-sages as the theme of three canonical poems (I, XI, and XX). I have reference to Hirose Tanso who, because of his political and social nonconformism and love of nature, has been likened to his American contemporary Thoreau—not without more than just a tinge or a tang of Robert Frost's rather urbane rusticity, I might add. My "reply" to Hirose's "letter", excerpted in Canon XI, should be considered, therefore, as a purely rhetorical fiction.*

—W. B.

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Harmonious-breath (Chi-yün): Three Arrangements of Chrysanthemums at the Autumn Festival in Stockton:

Mori-bana:
Brave manzanitas,
Orange-flecked and lavender!—
What flagrant sanguines
Young Hisayo Shinmoto
Marshaled against sprigs of yew!

Seika:
With greater restraint
Mitsue Ogino heard
Yamei's clear cascades—
Hovering beneath the moon
In stealthy opalescence.

Nage-ire:
Hirose Tanso
Watched ten thousand summer suns
Dispel the hoarfrost,
Beyond his bamboo close,
And drink the iridescent dew.

Planned-distance (Tan-yüan): Three Fishermen Returning Across Frosty Bottom Lands in Late December Moonlight:

I have recently completed a landscape of the Cañada de los Poblanos,
With the distant peaks and ravines of Mount Diablo
Almost obscured by clouds of sapphire and shadows of midnight blue.

Towards the apex of a promontory of one of the mountain's flanks,
I painted three fishermen returning from a day's outing in single file.
Their light-footed leader is not so elegantly stanced
As one of Ma Fei's angling philosophers, perhaps;
Yet he would appear to be exercising his mind's eye more than his legs,

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His gaze transfixed by a volant shaft of moonlight striking the foreland.
The second companion lags far in the rear, heavily laden
Like a carthorse with tackle and gear—and with fish—
That the mind's eye caught.—
But the middle man never really got into the picture at all,
Because an unscrupulous intervening alibi
Proved conclusively that he had never been there to begin with.

Truthful-revelation (P'e-cho): On the Legend of North Peak, Once Known to the Bolbones as the Haunt of the Three Spirits:

Choris chronicles, "I have never seen a Digger smile."—
Boris retorts, "Nor have you ever seen one look you in the face,
Ever since you lied to them four times—*you know, toes, tray, quarrel!*"

This happened over yonder, across the Bay at Yerba Buena,
Before St. Francis wept to see his name in neon lights.—
Up here the sprightly doe's nose is stopped with *estafiarte:*
Over there the Wolf of Gubbio still dines on *scugnizzi.*—
But the Coyote, the Eagle, and the Humming Bird
Still hold sway on Diablo's bleakest cromlech,
For in the springtide moon they leave their cold stone hogans
To dance a trice on the brink of a westering world.

Unusual design (Chi-pi) near Altamont Pass:

Beneath lie Madre Tierra's memoirs—
Once apocalyptic, lately lyrical.
One reads that foothill's testament,
Fascicled by sheep-gut trails.

But here, beside this gallows oak,
One reads that Joaquin Murietta slashed
The throats of three vaqueros
For the mere three ounces fine.

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Untamed-wildness (Tsung-hung): To Hirose Tanso at "Eagle's Aerie"—His Hermitage on Desolation Point—My Greetings during a Prolonged Illness:

" . . . We face many troubles throughout the world.—
You and I had better learn to love one another.—
Open my rustic bamboo close at dawn.—
Beyond, the frost lies white as snow.—
You'd better fetch some water at the stream
Whilst I gather kindling wood. . . . "

. . . . .

Where letters and landscapes lighten the kindling,
Adding charred fibres to earth's slow sublimation,
One no less solitary than yourself, Hirose,
Ends his days in otiose speculations
Concerning atmosphere and motion, line and form.
For their daily fare, meanwhile, your chrysanthemums
Prefer rotting leaves to ink-stained sheets.—
What you and your friend seek fruitlessly and feverishly,
The senile have found readily enough—
Without your ardor and his heat.

Tell me, Hirose, as you have watched him dip and daub,
In fair and foul weather, these past thirty years,
Have you once witnessed his soul's inner surge
Trans-humanate his outer gyre?

Wearily yet warily he lies prone in his bunk,
In this culturally aseptic lazaretto,
Facing Mingliaotse's penultimate blank white wall.
Shall he find here what other daubers used to seek,
Or thought they sought, beyond your aerie and the sea's brim?—
Shall he trace here in false fresco on true gesso
His master work in the manner of that ancient *guru*?—
The one whose dragon strokes roiled up such ooze and slime,
Every time his cell's subaqueous ceiling leaked,
As to incur the ruthless ridicule of urbane shrimps?

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Sacred-solitude (Huang-han): On the Stone-drum Character for Death:

What largesse
To find Sun's
Corona
Moon's nimbus!—

Man kneeling
Behind Death
Yields his corse,
Defaulting
By six feet.

Clean-strength (Chien-chieh): Homage to a Master:

Hirose Tanso, through his rustic gate at dawn,
Once looked upon a world as troubled as our own.—
His brook was there for asking and receiving,
His firewood for the fetching near the thicket.—
All friendships he had cherished were renewed;
And each imperial crest beyond his bamboo close
Flourished throughout the autumn frosts,
And all but wrote his neat impassioned poems for him.

ALAN NEAME

Hot Mandate

Thick, above the palm-tree, arches
Sky opaque as Empire Butter,
And the frond where shitehawk perches
Fades from green to grubby pewter;

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Paper-white, the lizard twitches
As its concrete slab grows hotter,
As the afternoon blast scorches
Sahib to a juiceless neuter.

Now the Mem in bulging breeches
Climbs into her red two-seater!
Damning all defective clutches
As she damns the damned self-starter.

Oh, behold her in her breeches!
Oh, behold her in her sweater!
Oh, behold her as she fetches
Up beside her favourite fitter!

"Abdul, pedal . . . pedal catches . .
"Trouble with this damned self-starter . . "
Lo, the pander-star approaches;
Lo, the breasts buck in the sweater.

Deep into the car he reaches,
Deep into the red two-seater,
Abdul, father of hot clutches:
Mem emits a rasping splutter.

. . . . .

—Heard her latest?
—Only snatches . .
—Saw the *whole thing* through the shutter.

From the bar a Begum belches
At the shame of such a creature.

—Dirty trollop!
—Most unBritish!
—Someone ought to raise the matter
—With H. E.
Miss Croydon reaches
Over for a dash of bitters.

—Husband mentioned in despatches . .
—Dreadful for *him*!
—Nasty nature

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—Driving out with them hot letches.
—Tarred and feathered . .
—Racial traitor.

Deep among the scented vetches
Flares the Mem's enamelled lighter;
In the club a lady retches
While her fellow-ladies titter.

—British passport . .
—More than riches.
—Trollop!
—Children . .
—Tragic!
—Gutter. . .
—From Karachi . .
—*BLACKS!*
—*APACHES!*
—Oughter be sent ome, she oughter.

Breathless Mem resumes her breeches:
Abdul keeps the enamelled lighter;
While a lady from Stoke Poges
Lamms out at a wide-eyed waiter.

From his room the Sahib lurches
Warning off some native blighter
Who has trespassed in his porches
To request a glass of water.

. . . . . .

But above the city watches
One whose throat is parched and bitter,
One who scans the heavens' arches
For the advent of that meteor

Presaging a term approaches
To the mandate; when the chatter
Of imperial pigs and bitches
Shall be stilled; and they, dead matter.

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RICHARD CLAY

The Nominating Committee

THE WATER PUMP STARTED in the cellar at the same time that the doorbell rang. Walter Kirkland squeezed his feet back into his shoes.

"They're early," he said, as he heaved himself from his chair. "Now you'll have to get the coffee going. I don't want any fuss while they're here."

Sally's feet were tucked under her as she sat on the sofa. She put the paper down with a rustling sound and jumped up. "It won't take a minute," she said. Her voice was soft and precise and gave an impression of confidence. She paused in the doorway and turned her head. "I'll be right back. I don't want to miss a minute of this."

"Who says you're invited? You're not on the committee."

"Ha!" she laughed. "This is my house; that's committee enough for me."

Walter chuckled to himself as she disappeared around the corner. He ambled through the hall to the front door, switching on the lights inside and out. The soft spring rain had been falling for three days. As he looked out through the curtained glass at his two visitors he saw the water dripping from the points of their umbrellas. It was Joe Partridge, who managed the branch bank in Snowden, and Horace Gardner, who had his own business in Philadelphia but lived just down the street. They had come together in Horace's Buick and parked it in the drive.

Walter swung the door open. "Come on in," he cried. "What a night! Here—" He reached for their coats and helped them off. "I appreciate you fellows coming. I wouldn't have pushed this meeting on a night like this, but we can't wait." As he led them down the hall they nodded their heads slowly as if they shared with him some grave and urgent knowledge.

He had no sooner settled them in his big comfortable living room than the doorbell rang again. This time it was a woman by herself, Mary Massiello, a huge broad-beamed female of extraordinary good nature and political shrewdness.

"Welcome, Mary." He squeezed her hand. "It's good to see

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you." He glanced over her shoulder as he took her coat and saw a Ford standing in the drive behind the Buick. A match flared in the darkness inside it and disappeared. "Is there somebody with you?" he asked. "Why don't I ask him in for coffee?"

"Please, Walter, it is nothing for you to worry. He is my friend, and he will wait."

Andy Merson, the last member of the committee, arrived twenty minutes later. He was poorly dressed, and his coat was wet through. It was obvious that he'd walked from the bus stop. Walter and Andy had gone to the same school together and graduated in the same class, but Andy had not done well and was still working behind the counter in his father's drug store. He was still a bachelor who had interested himself in politics the way other men take up hobbies. There was no job of poll watching, vote counting, or registering new voters that was too much drudgery for him. He was the sort of person who was extremely useful to the Party and uncommonly needed. If his views were not generally followed at the policy level of the Party, they were at least listened to respectfully because he represented the working core of the Party as well as an important segment of the town.

When all of them were laughing and talking and leaning their heads together Walter turned away and went to his comfortable chair at the end of the room. A card table stood in front of it, littered with indexes and folders and pads and pencils. He picked up a pencil and tapped it against his teeth as he looked around.

Their faces were flushed with the pleasure they all felt at the success of their jokes and gossip and with a deeper secret excitement at their portents of what would happen tonight. Walter wondered at the shortness of their memories or perhaps at the marvelous callousness by which humans protect themselves against what might hurt; because for Walter it still did hurt. Only a week ago today every face in this room had been filled with grief and sadness as they watched Bill Myers lowered into his grave.

For ten years Bill had been Chairman of the Town Committee and had guided the Republican Party and the town itself with a cautious loving hand. He had taught a dozen people how to take responsibility and a hundred how to use it. It was he who had gotten Walter interested in politics and encouraged him and advised him and finally found the right place for him as treasurer of the town. Walter had blossomed under his care. They had been

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like father and son. Now Bill was gone, leaving a vacuum so huge it could never be filled; but that was Walter's job tonight.

And yet it was not his only job, for the Republican Party was in serious trouble in Snowden, as it was throughout the country. The banks were closed, the Democrats had come to power, and Roosevelt had just been sworn in as President. To be a Republican at this time was to be branded and blamed and all but convicted for the presence of soup lines and shanty towns and men without work and all the misery of the Depression. The Republicans were on the defensive. What purpose they had once had, what drive and force and belief, what simple rallying cry that made them great had long ago been lost in the years of plenty.

Not that the election had gone as badly in Snowden as it had in the big cities. Snowden had, without exception, been comfortably Republican for more than fifty years. What the Party stood for appealed alike to the rich from Philadelphia who built their homes on the edge of town and the merchants who owned the stores and the Italians who worked in the railroad shops. But a change was taking place. People who had nver doubted their leadership were now asking questions. Old friends and neighbors who had always gladly promised their allegiance were now more reticent. Snowden wasn't lost. In the November election it had still turned in a majority for Hoover, but the majority was dangerously small; and this was Walter's job tonight.

He cleared his throat to get their attention. "I think we ought to get started," he said. Their faces turned to him, suddenly serious and attentive, like a courtroom when the gavel sounds. "I'm not going to make a speech," he continued. "We all know why we're here. We've got to find someone to take Bill's place, and it won't be easy. We're going to miss Bill. You don't find people like that twice in a lifetime. Bill Myers was a great man in—" Walter paused, not wanting his feelings to take over when he needed all his control. "But it's more than just finding a replacement for Bill," he went on. "We have a town election coming up in the Fall. This is probably the most important election in Snowden in many years for this reason. What happened last November was all mixed up with things happening all over the country, things that don't affect us, but next November we're on our own. Next November we've got to win. I don't mean by a few hundred votes; I mean by a thousand. I want a man at the top in this Party who can show the

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world we've been pushed far enough. I want a man who doesn't know any other way but up. I want a man who can dig in and fight. Now, I have a list—," he tapped the table in front of him,"—a few names I jotted down, but I'm not going to read it. I'm going to throw it away." He crunched up the paper and tossed it in the wastebasket.

"Walter—"

"Just a minute, Joe. I haven't finished. The reason I'm not reading my list to you is that I want this meeting to be wide open, and I mean wide open. I don't want to influence you in any way. We've got to look at the field tonight. The man we pick has got to be the best there is. Now, Joe, why don't you start us off, since you seem like you've got something hot to say."

"I didn't mean to break in, Walter. I thought you were finished."

"That's all right, Joe. No offense meant—no offense taken."

Joe Partridge shifted forward on the sofa cushion. He was a robust man with a healthy complexion and a prominent nose. For six years he had been the district leader in Sunnybrook Acres, where most of the wealthy Philadelphia people lived, so he carried some weight although Walter still looked on him as an amateur.

"What I wanted to say—" Joe rubbed his high shiny forehead. "I don't know how to put it. Bill was my friend. We're all going to miss him, and on that I agree with Walter. I never knew a better Town Chairman. He held the spot for ten years, and I don't think anybody here will disagree with me that he stood for everything that made this country strong. This far I go with Walter, but I don't agree that we open the gates. Bill never meant us to use that way. He left us a clear sign to follow. When his heart began to give him trouble, where did he turn? He picked Sid Bailey, a man cast in his own mold, set in his own style, a man he could trust. I don't think we should forget a thing like that. If Sid was good enough for Bill he's good enough for me. I'd like to see him get the job, Walter. I think he's our man."

"So do I," said Horace Gardner.

This was no surprise to Walter. Sid Bailey was not only capable and popular, but he was a local man who had risen by his own ability to become court judge for the town of Snowden. He had been acting chairman of the Party since Bill's death, and it was only natural that he should be named. And yet Walter did not feel right about it. He looked at Mary Massiello and Andy Merson.

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Neither of them had spoken, but he knew from the expression on their faces that their thoughts were much as his. There were things about Sid that none of them liked.

"Well, Mary," he asked, "what do you say?"

She shrugged. "Judge Bailey has good friends. I think I wait."

"Oh, come on, Mary, that's not—"

"Excuse me, Walter," Joe interrupted. He leaned forward on the sofa. "Mary, we're all friends. I want to ask you—are you turning your back on Sid Bailey?"

"My back?" She blinked her soft brown eyes. "I don't turn my back on anybody yet."

"Are you for him or against him?"

She shrugged her shoulders again. "I don't know," she answered. "He's a good man, but I like to wait."

Joe Partridge jumped up from the sofa and began to pace the floor.

"That's what's wrong with this whole Party," he cried. "We're half hearted. We're licked before we're started. Just because we lost the election we let the Democrats frighten us half to death. We let them blame us for the Depression, the weather, and everything else. We've got to close ranks. We've got to be strong. We can't let them think we're divided, can we, Mary?"

Mary looked at him soberly. "I'm not divided, Mr. Partridge," she said. "I'm a good Republican."

"I know you are, Mary," Joe apologized, drawing a deep breath. "Please don't misunderstand me. I'm thinking only of the Party. Let's find the best man we can, and then let's fight for him with everything we've got. I like Sid Bailey, but I think I know who you have in mind. Is it Frank Romano?"

Mary cocked her head thoughtfully. "Frank has many friends," she said.

Walter knew at once it wasn't Frank. He had been listening to Joe with some resentment, but he relaxed now. There was a lot that Joe didn't know. Frank Romano was a considerable power in the Italian community, but he had promised to marry a cousin of Mary's and then left her, and Joe didn't know this.

"I like Frank myself," Joe went on confidently. "In normal times I'd give him my support, but these aren't normal times, Mary. We have to put aside our personal loyalties and think of the good of the whole town. Don't you agree?"

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Mary frowned. Walter knew she was annoyed at being put under pressure, but he also suspected that she was a little awed by Joe. Joe seemed to sense this, too. He changed his tactics at once.

"Let me say this, Mary," Joe continued. "Frank's too valuable a man to be left out. If Sid becomes Chairman he'll need a Vice-Chairman. I can see Frank Romano in that spot. I think they'd make a crackerjack team. I think they'd give this town the leadership we need."

Horace Gardner had been staring out the windows at the rain, but he turned and looked sharply at Joe. Even Walter looked up in surprise. Bill Myers had two principal lieutenants, Sid Bailey and Frank Romano, both of them powerful men in separate ways. There had always been friction between them which only a man like Bill could keep down. Now, with Bill's death, there had begun an underground maneuvering and shifting of pressures to which Walter had been immediately sensitive and against which he had prepared himself, knowing it would break out tonight. But he hadn't expected anything like this. Mary nodded her massive head slowly as if debating within herself. Walter could almost see what was going on in her mind. Whatever her private feelings might be she was too good a politician to turn down cold a chance to unite the Bailey and Romano factions.

Walter cut the tip off a cigar and lit it carefully, drawing hard until the end glowed red. He looked on Mary as a rock, but now she was wavering, and he knew he must stop her. If Joe had his way he would force a vote and nominate Sid without another name being mentioned. Walter wanted to speak out, but he was afraid he might push her into a decision she'd later regret. He looked around for support and saw Andy Merson staring down at his hands. He knew he'd draw a blank with Andy, who probably had no idea of what a Bailey-Romano team would mean. At this moment he saw Sally in the hall, standing slightly aside from the doorway, like an actress awaiting a cue.

"Hey, Sal," he called. "Come on in. How's the coffee?"

"Hot," she cried as she sailed into the room, nodding brightly to all of them. "Mary," she called. "Andy, Joe, how are you? Oh, Mr. Gardner, you don't have to stand up. Here, have some hot coffee. It was wonderful of you to come out on a night like this. I hope you weren't soaked."

As she passed the cups and filled them from the steaming pot she

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seemed to spread a magic warmth around the circle, and Walter was pleased with her.

"They say an army travels on its stomach," she laughed. "But I've never seen a committee that could keep its head without hot coffee."

"Coffee and," Mary added, stressing "and".

"Oh, yes—" She disappeared and returned in a moment with a plate of chocolate cakes she'd baked that afternoon. "I'm sorry," she said. "I almost forgot. Now I won't bother you any more," she said and began to leave.

"Stay a minute, Sally." Mary patted the sofa. "Come sit with me. You do not bother us. We are guests in your house."

Sally hesitated and then perched on the arm of the sofa. "Well, if you don't mind, I'd like to stay a minute," she said. "But if I'm interrupting your discussion, please tell me to go."

Andy Merson laughed unexpectedly. "You can't interrupt our discussion, Sal. We're not having any. We're backing the same old gang."

"Oh?"

"Bailey and Romano."

"Bailey *and* Romano," she repeated, her eyes darting around at all of them. "Whew! You're really doing it up brown, aren't you? Even Bill Myers had a hard enough time keeping those two in line."

Mary chuckled, and then there was an embarrassed silence.

Horace Gardner put down his cup. "I didn't know that," he said. "I've been told they work well together."

Sally pretended not to hear and began to talk to Mary about a dress she was making. Horace Gardner pressed his lips together and glanced at Joe Partridge.

"They do, they do," Joe said, unable to resist entering the conversation. "However, they're both strong men, Horace. You have to expect some disagreement between people like that, but it doesn't mean a thing. Sally was just making a joke, weren't you, Sal?"

"I wouldn't call it a joke."

"Well, I wouldn't call it a joke what happened to us in the last election, either. We can't laugh at that, so there's no point in being flippant, Sal. We need all the strength we can find in the Party right now. A team like this is what we need. They'll put us back

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where we belong. You can't deny that, Sal."

Walter smiled to himself. He knew that Joe had made a tactical error in even talking to Sally. He should have gotten rid of her at once. Now he was in for it.

"You may be right, Joe," Sally answered. "But I wonder if there isn't another way. Times are changing, and people get tired of the same old faces. Bailey and Romano are wrong. Every bone in my body tells me that. Maybe they're strong, but what kind of strength do they have? Can it give new life to the Party? I don't think so. You have a chance now to clean house. Why not do it? You need new ideas and new people. I'm thinking of Fred Nugent or Bill Elliott or that friend of yours, Mary. After all, the country's growing. We can't stand still."

"We're not standing still," Joe began angrily and then seemed to realize the trap he was in. He looked at his watch.

"Run along, Sal," Walter warned. "It's getting late, and we've got business to do."

"Oh, of course," Sally jumped up, looking around at all of them. "I hope I haven't annoyed anyone with my purely feminine point of view."

Horace Gardner has risen when she rose. "Not at all, Sally," he said. "Your views have been as refreshing as your coffee. Both were delightful. Thank you." He made a courtly little bow of his head to which she replied with a nod and a smile as she gathered the cups and left the room.

Mary Massiello seemed to stir from some great depth within herself where she had been hiding all evening, and her eyes brightened as she slyly glanced at the rest of them. "That Sally," she said. She shook slowly with a private mirth. "That's a good girl, Walter," she said. She tapped her forehead. "Plenty up here." she winked.

"That's right," Andy Merson said suddenly. "Sally's got a point. Times have changed, and we gotta change too."

"I don't agree," Joe said abruptly. He was on his feet now and pacing the floor. "Oh, I'm not against change," he conceded. "There are times when it's needed, but let's not look for change just for the sake of change itself. Let's not get in a panic. I think of a ship in a storm, and the captain is lost. The first mate is a man of long experience and proven ability. Do we reject him? Do we put him aside and clean house, as Sally says, and turn over to some junior man this terrible responsibility?" Joe paused in the middle of

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his stride and planted his feet apart. "I say no. I say I will not abandon my Party. I will not see it made a plaything for trials and errors. We Republicans stand for something. Let's not forget it. We should be proud of what we are."

He turned his back on them and went to the window and looked out at the rain. The rest of them were silent for a moment. Walter drew on his cigar.

"Excuse, please, Walter," Mary said. "I am not for arguments now. Mr. Partridge is right. He is proud to be a Republican. So am I. He is sticking with the Party. So am I. But Walter and all you good friends—we must change. It is not how I want or you want. It is not so simple as boats with captains. My people are asking questions. They do not like it now. They want it different."

"That's right," Andy Merson said. "We can't forget the public. We don't need to be socialists, but we gotta change. Too many people in this town remember things like Sunnybrook Acres."

Walter frowned and half closed his eyes. This was strong talk for Andy. Joe Partridge swung around from the window.

"What's wrong with Sunnybrook Acres?" he demanded.

"You know as well as I do, Mr. Partridge."

"Yes, I know this. If it wasn't for Bill Myers it would still be a swamp. Bill was a man of vision. Nobody else would touch it with a ten-foot pole."

"Nobody still wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole if the town hadn't drained the land, and that was his doing."

"I think that's enough on that," Walter interrupted, suddenly angry at all of them. "That's over and done with. It has nothing to do with us tonight."

Horace Gardner was listening carefully. "Will you pardon me if I disagree, Walter?" he asked. "Three of the five of us here tonight have made our homes in Sunnybrook Acres. If this has become an issue, I'd like to know why. I'd like to get it straight for once."

"There's nothing to it, Horace. This whole section around here was nothing but a marsh at the time. Bill had a dream he wanted to give the town a park, and he hit on the idea of draining this area. You see what we have now—the gardens, the duck pond, the baseball diamond, a place for the kids to play. There isn't a park anywhere around Philadelphia more beautiful than this. And all he got out of it or ever wanted to get out of it was the satisfaction it gave him. He never made a penny out of the rest of the land, and

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I can testify to that myself, because that's the kind of man he was."

"Bill Myers was straight," Andy admitted. "I never said otherwise. But that doesn't go for the rest of the gang. What a field day they had! They bought up all the land around here at forty dollars an acre and sold it at four hundred. I'd like a nickel for every dollar they put away. I'd spend the rest of my life in Florida."

"Are you saying they weren't honest?" Joe asked loudly.

"I'm not saying anything except what I saw. I'm not—"

"Excuse, please, Mr. Partridge," Mary interrupted. "You understand what Andy says. Sunnybrook Acres leaves a bad smell, that's all. And Judge Bailey was the lawyer so the smell is the same with him."

"The lawyer," Joe shouted. "And who was the contractor, who was the builder, who laid out this whole development and sold the lots? Everyone was in on this, and Frank Romano was just as deep as anyone else."

"Please, please, Mr. Partridge, we are wasting time. Sunnybrook Acres is not important. In good times no one would care, but now is bad times and everyone cares. We cannot be the same. We must change. We must have new names."

She settled back and crossed her arms.

The room was silent. If it was possible for Joe to be chastened he was chastened. But Walter knew they would hear more from him. He had to give Joe credit. He wasn't much of a politician, but he believed in himself, and that made a lot of difference.

Joe leaned forward in his chair. "Mary," he said softly, "what is it you want? Isn't second place good enough for Frank?"

"No," she answered. "I do not want Frank any more. Bailey and Romano and all those people are the same. I do not want them any more. I want new names. What do you say, Mr. Gardner? You have good sense. Am I wrong?"

Walter smiled to himself. He liked Mary and respected her, and he had seen her at work before. He could feel her trying to draw Horace in, and he wanted to warn him to be wary, but he decided that he could fend for himself. Walter was puzzled by Horace Gardner, and he thought Mary was too. He was an unknown quantity, politically speaking. For years he had been involved with the finances of the Party and had contributed heavily to its support, but he had so carefully avoided all posts and appointments and political rewards of any kind that most people had no idea that he

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served any function in the political matters of the town. Only those on the inside knew how much was owed to him, and even they had never dared to take him for granted. Bill Myers had made that clear. He had always treated Horace with respect and deference, as if his support was something the Party had to earn by its actions. The question tonight was how firmly was he committed to Sid Bailey, and that's what Mary was asking him now.

"I don't think you're wrong." Horace answered. "I agree with Joe that we shouldn't ignore an experienced man like Sid Bailey just to show the voters that we can change, like a girl who wears a new dress to show she owns more than one, but if we have to change, —that's another matter." He rose to his feet. He was the tallest man in the room, and he took on a certain stature in their eyes as he stood there thoughtfully, his hands in his pockets. "I am seriously wondering about this," he said. "If we've taken on too much baggage and are suffering from a kind of hardening of the political arteries, if we've become useless to those who believe in us, if our spirit has drained away—then we need a change. That's up to us to decide tonight. I think we should start by considering as many people as we can. We might try some of the names that Sally mentioned. Fred Nugent," he said, "what about him?"

For an hour or more they discussed Fred Nugent and Bill Elliott and half a dozen other men who had served on some committee or headed a drive or been elected town representative or had gained some following or some reputation for the way they had handled one or more of the public responsibilities of the community. Sally came in twice with coffee when the meeting seemed to flag, and each time the discussion began again with a new desperation. Walter withdrew his attention slightly as time went on, listening with one ear to the conversation and with the other to the pump in the cellar. For three days the rain had come down, and the ground was heavy with water. It had started seeping in his cellar that afternoon, and only the pump was now keeping it dry.

Walter considered that the meeting was going about as he expected and should break up a little after midnight. The discussion of new names did not produce anything remarkable, as he had not supposed it would. If he had any criticism in his own mind of Bill Myers' administration it would be simply that it was too efficient and too tightly organized. It left no space for the new men to broaden themselves and no room for opposition to grow. Because of this

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the men they discussed had no real status. They were none of them leaders. The members of the committee rejected each one in turn because in their hearts they could not accept as a leader a man they had not yet learned to respect.

The discussion lasted until after eleven, but long before that Walter began to feel uneasy. At first he thought it was the sound of the rain and then he thought it was because he was discouraged and finally he decided it was because he had to go to the bathroom.

The talk was heated when he rose. Even Sally had perched on a stool and was deep in conversation with Joe Partridge. She had been in and out so often that any thought that she wasn't on the committee had vanished, and Walter noticed that her opinions were as heeded as the rest of them.

He pushed himself from the soft pillows of his armchair and slipped through the kitchen to the back of the house, where he ran his real estate business. A small light was on in his office as he hurried through it towards his private bathroom. Sally and the maids were allowed out here only at cleaning time, and apparently they'd been here today because a window had been left open in the bathroom, and the rain had come in. He leaned his elbows on the wet sill and looked out across his dark gardens. The streetlight at the corner was swinging in the wind, and the bare winter branches of his trees were weaving their fingers in a wild sort of dance. Everything was quiet in the sleeping streets but the sound of water. It dripped and ran and tumbled with the soft lovely liquid sound of its own draining and purging and downward seeking. He felt alone in a vastness he couldn't grasp. He felt alone without Bill.

Bill would never have let this happen. Bill would have listened to them and let them have their say, and then very gently but persuasively and without any of them in the slightest suspecting it a change would occur in their air, their mood, their humor as he asked a few questions here and there, and every single person would have honestly gone home convinced that the meeting had finally been swayed by the deep conviction of each of them in turn.

The trouble was that Walter didn't know of a good Town Chairman left in Snowden. He could find fault with every name that came to mind. If he couldn't pick a man himself, how could he guide his committee? As he listened to the murmuring of their voices in the distance he knew they were still floundering, having rejected the old and being unable to accept the new. And what had

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he done to lead them? The whole future of their Party was at stake, here in Snowden as much as anywhere else. It was only a small town, a tiny bit of a whole nation, but no bit of it was too small not to be important.

He flipped off the lights and hurried back through the kitchen. Suddenly he stopped and stood still. A strange voice was talking in the next room. He listened in the dark, trying to recognize it. His mind raced, puzzled, angry. What was this about? And then he knew. It was Mary. The man in her car. She was a devil. She'd been waiting to spring this trap all evening. He moved with surprising agility, wondering if he'd already been outsmarted.

"Ah, Walter," Mary cried. "We have been waiting for you. This is Lou Dordona, the husband of my cousin Carmela. He is telling us about Tony Avila."

"Oh." Walter shook hands. "Glad to meet you," he said with a feeling of relief. This was a small dark man with a sorrowful face. He certainly was no candidate. "Don't let me interrupt you," Walter said, as he settled back in his chair.

Their visitor continued with a mournful tale of personal trouble and tribulation that concerned five children and the loss of his job at the railroad shop. Walter listened carefully, wondering what Mary was up to. Lou Dordona then told them how he had been helped by Tony Avila and given work, and his face shone, and his eyes sparkled with excitement.

"Ah, yes, Lou," Mary sighed. "That Tony. Soon you will all know him. Such a big heart; such a man of strength. All he could do for us I could never tell you. This would be no mistake."

She raised herself slowly from the couch and proceeded towards the door. The rest of them rose and straightened their clothes and followed her. Sally stopped at the doorway.

"Aren't you coming?" she asked.

"Coming where?"

"We're going to Tony Avila's house."

"Tony Avila! What the hell's going on with my own committee as soon as I turn my back?"

"Don't lose your temper. It makes you look ugly."

"What's got into you, Sally? Why are you bothering poor Tony Avila at this time of night?"

"We want to see if he'll take the nomination."

"Tony! He won't touch politics."

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"That's what I thought, too, but Mary called him on the phone, and he told us to come right over."

"Oh, did he?"

"Yes. So don't be a frump and sulk here by yourself. Come on with us."

She turned away and ran down the hall to join the others. Walter sat back and tapped his teeth with a pencil. Mary was smart. Tony Avila was the only really rich Italian in town. Although he was a tremendously popular figure, he had always avoided anything to do with politics. If someone like Mary could convince him now—could inspire him with the spirit of the crusader and persuade him to take the job—it would be a stroke of genius. With his reputation for honesty and independence he would be irresistible and impossible to beat. But would he be good for the Party? This was what worried Walter. A man like Tony would have no political obligations and would be difficult to manage. He was sure to have a thousand ideas, most of them impractical; but worse than that, he would collide with the real professionals in the Party and they would wash their hands of him and let him hang himself, and in the end the Party would suffer. Walter was sure of this, and his quick and capable mind, now recovered from its flush of anger, searched for an answer.

"Walter."

He looked up. Mary was standing in the doorway. Her coat was wet from the rain. "Are you not coming?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"Do you not like Tony?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, I like Tony. He's a popular man, Mary, but I'd hate to see us make a mistake. Tony is one of those knights in shining armor. He's a good man, but he's not a politician."

"Bill Myers was not a politician."

"I know," Walter sighed.

"I am sick of politicians," she said. "You and I are politicians, Walter. I am sick of us."

"We make the wheels go, Mary."

"There is more to go than wheels."

She came into the room and shed her coat, looking straight at him with her large brown eyes. "I am sick of wheels," she said. "I am angry with a deep feeling. My people come to me, men with

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families, and they cry in front of me with tears in their eyes. They ask me for help, and I cannot help them. They fall on their knees and kiss my hand, and there is nothing I can do. But I ask Tony, and he gives them work, a little work until times are better. It is not much, but they hold up their heads. This is what we need. No more politicians, but men who are strong. I will work for these men. Let us all work for them, Walter. Come see Tony now."

Walter laced his fingers together and squeezed his hands. He was tempted to go, if only to add a sobering voice to an already overcharged group. But as he rose he felt again the uneasiness that had bothered him before, more sharply now, so that he looked around him warily, and sniffed for smoke, and cocked an ear to listen for any unusual noise. The house was silent and seemed all right. He wrinkled his nose in concentration, and then suddenly it struck him what was wrong. The pump in the cellar had stopped. How long had it been since he'd heard it? An hour? Two hours? How much water filled his cellar? He wondered if it had reached the fire box of his heater, and he knew he would have to tend to this at once.

"Mary," he said, "I'd like to go with you, but I have something important to do. Tony's a fine man. You take the others to meet him, and we'll talk it over when you get back. You understand, don't you?"

Mary blinked her eyes, but her expression didn't change. "Yes, Walter," she said. "I understand. You cannot change. You are still a politician, and now you must talk on the phone." She wrapped her coat around herself without another word and left.

Walter started towards the kitchen when he heard a footstep in the hall. Horace appeared in the doorway.

"Hello," Walter said. "I thought you'd gone with the rest."

"Not me." Horace sat down and began flipping through a magazine. He gave the impression of being sulky or angry about something. "I don't know what those people think they're up to," he burst out. "We came here for a meeting, not a sideshow."

Walter shrugged. "I know." He paused. "Will you excuse me, Horace? I have something I want to do before they get back. Make yourself at home."

Horace glanced up. "Go right ahead," he said and looked down again. Walter shook his head. There were so many people, so many pressures.

He sat at the bottom of the cellar steps and removed his shoes and

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socks and rolled up his pants to the knees. The water that covered the floor was motionless as glass and surprisingly cold when he stepped into it. For a moment he felt undignified and foolish to be wading in water like a boy, but he soon forgot his dignity and began to enjoy it. The little wavelets that he made as he walked rippled in the glare of the light and lapped against the trunks and boxes and the legs of his workbench.

The place was a shambles of floating lumber and paper and cans. All those possessions so neatly stored were now afloat. The water was more than two inches deep but was not dangerous yet if he could stop it. He examined his pump. It was so hot he could barely touch it. As he switched it on and off, it made a wounded sound, and he knew it was beyond repair tonight. This had happened before, and somewhere he had an old fashioned emergency pump that he could use. It worked on water pressure instead of electricity and had to be connected to the plumbing system with a piece of hose. It was such a troublesome thing to get working that he half thought of letting it go, but the water was rising and could do much damage, and Sally would be wild.

After a few minutes' search he found the old brass pump under the stairs. He hauled it out and dusted it off and placed it on the floor. It looked like a tea kettle set on a trivet. He pulled the hose off the storage shelves and got some wrenches out of his toolbox and set to work. It was not easy. Nothing fitted or was the right size or length or shape. He was on his knees in the water, his hair in his face, sweat running down his cheeks, his hands filthy, and his whole self disheveled, but he got it hooked up with the faucet in the laundry tub and another line running out of a cellar window. When he turned on the valve he could hear a chuckling sound from the body of the pump as its empty chambers filled with water.

Walter stood by for a moment until he was sure the pump was working smoothly. He sucked a knuckle he had skinned until the bleeding stopped, then he waded over to the liquor closet and unlocked the door and took a quart of Canadian whiskey from the shelf.

When he was sitting at ease on the stool by his workbench with a new cigar in his mouth and the bottle open beside him he heard the pump suddenly gurgle, and he splashed across the room and found that one of the letters floating on the water had clogged the inlet. He pulled it off like a wet leaf, and as he did so he looked

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around and saw that all the other loose debris on the water was floating slowly towards the pump. For several minutes he splashed around the cellar gathering the soggy bits together in a dripping mass in his hands. Once more he perched on the stool, drinking occasionally from the bottle and puffing on the cigar. In this small area of his life he was beginning to feel that everything was under control again. His feet were cold, but he was happy.

From time to time he studied the level of the water. When it had gone down a certain amount he took a flat board and leaned over and swept it through the water like a farmer reaping, and the waves of water went sweeping towards the pump. Crouching over like this he went around the cellar working hard for several minutes at each of the low spots until he became conscious that he was being watched. He glanced towards the stairs and saw Horace sitting there removing his shoes. Walter straightened up in amazement.

"Hey, you don't have to do that," he said.

Their eyes met, and Horace smiled. "I heard you sweeping," he said. "I thought you'd need some help."

Walter was embarrassed and yet touched. "That's all right," he mumbled. "I can take care of it."

Horace stepped into the water in his bare feet and picked up a board and looked around. "What's the lowest place?" he asked. "If I know anything, it's the farthest point from the pump."

"That's right," Walter laughed. "Over here." He led the way to the dark corner on the other side of the stairs. They bent over and began to sweep, dragging their boards on the floor, each one trying to outdo the other until the puddle was dry. Then they moved on to another. The sweat was running in Walter's eyes. He had to admit that Horace could work. He was strong and fast and thorough. When the floor was clear of water and the pump was sucking air they both straightened up and Walter arched his back.

"Thanks," he said. "That was a real help."

"You should have told me before." He nodded towards the pump. "What happened to the other one?"

Walter shrugged. "Burned out, I guess. In a rain like this it runs all the time."

"Mine, too," Horace said.

Walter stared at him. "Yours too? Do you mean to tell me that you have water in that big house of yours?"

"What's size got to do with it? All it means is I have to have two pumps instead of one."

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"Two pumps!"

"One at each end."

"Well, I'll be damned!" Walter shook his head. He couldn't explain to himself how he felt at the moment. He had known Horace for years but had never been particularly close to him and did not feel much closer now only that a chance seemed to exist, a moment while both of them were exposed to each other, an interval of seconds before either of them could speak some trivial words that would close what was tentatively open.

"Two pumps," he repeated, beginning to chuckle and shake. He looked at Horace and his messed up hair and rolled up pants and bare feet, and he seemed so undignified and woebegone and downright bedraggled that Walter couldn't help laughing, not at Horace exactly and not at himself, although he must look more bedraggled than Horace, and not even at the wetness of his cellar, but at the deep down wetness of all cellars and the bedraggledness of all men.

"Two pumps!" He howled. "Goddamn!"

"What's so funny?"

"You—you—you got twice the trouble of anyone else."

Horace looked perplexed, and then suddenly he caught the infection and let out a roar that shattered all his remaining dignity. He howled and doubled over, and both of them now became uncontrollable and fell into each other's arms and slapped each other on the back and leaned over the bench and against the post and walked around the floor stamping their bare feet on the few remaining wet spots and shouting "Two pumps!" at each other in hoarse gasping voices, having forgotten any more what was so funny but only that it was good to laugh. They never wanted to stop, but they did stop, both of them feeling weak.

Walter leaned against the workbench and caught up the bottle standing on it. "Here," he cried, "look what we have." He held it up like a torch. "The Pride of the Old Dominion, right off the boat. I'll get you a glass."

"I don't need a glass."

Walter looked at him. "My mistake," he said. "I forgot you were a two pump man." Walter passed the bottle, looking pensive. "It's a sad thing," he said. "My wife doesn't like water in the cellar. It makes her fret. Do you know what I mean?"

"Mine frets too."

"I thought she would."

Walter and Horace exchanged a look.

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"Not that I like it myself," Walter added, "but why not get some fun out of things?"

"It's the first good laugh I've had in a long time," Horace said, wiggling his fingers as if to loosen the joints.

"Me, too," Walter agreed. "Women don't really know what's important. They think they do. My God, how they think they do. Look at Mary Massiello, rushing all over town like she's out to save the country. What the hell is she up to, Horace?"

"I think she's got a deal with Tony. I don't know too much about him. What's he like?"

"He's all right, but he's not our man."

"Then who is? What's wrong with Sid?"

Walter took a drink from the bottle and studied his cigar. "Horace," he said at last. "People like you and Sally come from the city, and you live here and get to know the town, but there's some things it's not easy for you to understand. We all grew up together, and there's not much we don't know about each other. Ever since I can remember, Sid has had a liking for sharp practice. He's a judge now and a respected man. None of us would say anything against him. Why should we? We're proud of him, and he's one of our own, but when a time comes like this we know he's not our man. Even Bill himself couldn't get us to swallow Sid."

"What do you mean, sharp practice? You can't hang a man because you don't like the color of his necktie. Are you saying he's done better than some of the other people around here, and maybe he's stepped on some toes? Is that it? Honestly, Walter, we have no time for these small town jealousies."

"Small town, big town," Walter said. "When a man's not right, he's not right." He cocked his head towards Horace. "When you bought your place Sid Bailey was your lawyer, wasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Did he happen to find a lien on your property when he searched your title?"

"Yes. How did you know that? It was only a small lien—a few hundred dollars. Some mix-up in the land records, Sid told me. He wanted to fight it. He said it wouldn't stand up in court, but I was anxious to start on the house, so I gave him some money to get it settled."

"I can understand that. Do you remember the name?"

"No. Let me think. Funston, I believe it was."

"Gerald B. Funston?"

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"Yes. The Gerald B. Funston estate. Do you know about it?"

Walter hesitated for a moment. "Yes, I do," he said. "Gerald B. Funston was a distant cousin of Sid's on his wife's side, but you wouldn't ordinarily know that."

Horace frowned. "Sid never told me it was his cousin's estate. I don't understand why—"

"Listen, Horace, wake up. Gerald B. Funston didn't leave any more estate than you could put in a gnat's eyebrow. Sid took your dough and put it in his pocket. He diddled you like he diddled the rest of us. Why don't you admit it?"

Horace didn't answer. Walter noticed the pump still sucking air, and he jumped down and went over to it and adjusted it until it was pumping slowly and could be left for the night. When he returned he saw that Horace was perched in the same position on the edge of the bench, immobile, gray and dejected as if some juice had been sucked out of him.

"How about another drink," Walter offered. "It'll do you good."

"No thanks. No more now." Horace slid down from the bench. "They'll be back soon. I ought to fix myself up."

His voice was thin and his whole demeanor so strange and abrupt that Walter had a sudden feeling of sympathy for him and patted his shoulder. "Don't take it so hard," he said. "Why not get it off your chest?"

Horace looked him in the eye. "Goddamn it, Walter," he cried. "I'm going to sue him. I'm going to take him into court and show everybody what a rotten crook he is. He's not going to make a fool out of anyone else like he did with me."

"Sure. That's a fine idea," Walter said. "Of course, you probably don't have any evidence. Sid's too smart not to be legal. If he gave you a receipt or anything like that, I'd be surprised. Did he?"

Horace thought for a moment. "No, I guess not." He sighed. "It makes me feel sick, Walter. I'm not used to dealing with crooks, and I don't like it. I don't know who's honest now, even you."

"That's right, you don't," Walter said. "It happens I know I'm honest, but you've got to make up your own mind."

"I'm sorry, Walter," Horace said, touching his arm. "I didn't mean it that way. You're perfectly right. We have to trust people. But I trusted Sid, and you see what happened. Even if I can't get at him in court, there must be some other way."

"Sid isn't all black. He's been a good worker. And don't forget the years he's put in. It might be better not to stir up a fuss."

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"I don't care. I have to do it, Walter. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't strike back at a man like that."

"Even if it hurts the Party?"

The color had come back into Horace's face. "If throwing out a crook will hurt the Party, maybe that's what it needs. Maybe it needs to be hurt to save it."

"Think again, Horace, think again. It's easy to wreck things but hard to mend them."

Horace looked down and finished putting on his shoes and rolled down his pants. "Walter," he said as he stood up straight. "I understand what you want, but do you understand what I want? You heard me tonight upstairs. I know I was being a little high flown with all that talk about hardening of the arteries and losing our spirit. Partly that was for Mary's benefit and partly it was because I don't talk easily about the things that are important to me. And this Party is important to me. I'm a Republican and not a Democrat because I believe in a republic and not in a democracy. I believe in responsibility and not in showmanship. I believe in a government I can trust and not one I have to watch. Even my wife tells me I'm too conservative, Walter, but I can't help that. That's the way I was born and brought up, and that's the way I am. There has to be room for people like me. We have to have a voice that can be heard. It is not a question of who is right or wrong, they or us. I am right for myself as they are right for themselves, but they are wrong for me, and I'll fight them as long as I live. I need a Party to do it. I need a strong Party, Walter, and an honest Party. I need a Party with courage and confidence and the almighty spirit to never be licked. I will put everything I have into it, body and soul, and will hold nothing back if I have faith. But I must have faith, Walter. That is the most important thing in the world to me now. Faith and courage. That's how I feel."

Walter had been putting on his shoes when Horace began to talk, but he stopped to listen to him more attentively. When he was finished, Walter nodded. They looked at each other in a new reflective way, and there was silence between them.

"We still have to find a new Town Chairman," Walter said at last. He finished lacing his shoes. "Have you ever thought of taking the job yourself, Horace?"

"Me? You're joking. If anyone deserves it, it ought to be you."

"No, it's not my style. I work with people, not with words. I could never stand up in front of a crowd and talk the way you do.

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You've got the touch, Horace. I think you're our man if you'll take the job."

"But I don't know a thing about it."

"Neither did Bill Myers when he started."

"Look Walter, I wouldn't have a chance. Sid Bailey and Frank Romano are the people who run this town. Everyone knows them. No one knows me."

"Don't let that worry you. They'll know you soon enough. Sure, it's going to be a fight, but I picked you for a fighter. Let's not quibble, Horace. A minute ago you were ready to drag Sid Bailey into court and sue him. Now you have a chance to beat him in a way that won't hurt the Party. Beat him now and he's done. Beat him now and you'll have a Party that's strong and fit and fighting mad. You'll have the kind of Party you want. It's up to you."

Walter rolled down his pants and stood up and looked around. He corked the bottle of whiskey and locked it in the cabinet again. He checked the pump for the last time and threw his cold cigar in the wastebasket as he walked by the bench on his way to the stairs. Horace stood there waiting for him.

"Well, are you game?" Walter asked.

"It seems like a wonderful opportunity to do some good, Walter."

"Does that mean you'll take it?"

"Do you think I have a chance?"

"Horace, I'm for you a hundred per cent, and I don't see why the others wouldn't be, but we have to handle this right. I think it's better if you resign from the committee and go home now. That'll give me a freer hand. I'll let it be known that you're not happy and how you feel about things in the Party, and then I'll take it from there. But don't go to bed; I may need you in a clinch. Okay?"

"On one condition, Walter. I want you as my Vice-Chairman."

"Oh, no. I'm saving that spot for Tony Avila."

"Oh, you are?" Horace laughed, "All right, but I want you on my team, or I won't say yes."

Walter chuckled. "Then you've already said yes, because I like a scrap, and I think this is going to be a good one. You couldn't keep me off your team if you tried. Is that a bargain?"

"It'll do for me."

They shook hands warmly and then walked out arm in arm to Horace's Buick. The rain had stopped and the clouds were racing under the stars. It had turned to a beautiful windy night with a

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hint of Spring. Walter could smell the soft warmth and wetness of the earth in the darkness around him, and it gave him pleasure. Long after the car was gone he stood there, waiting for the others, thinking, "Now I'm in for a siege," but he was happy about it and not discouraged. He felt a resurgence of energy, like a second wind, and he welcomed a test of his powers now that he knew what he wanted.

At twenty minutes to one in the morning Walter stood by the front door and said a few words to each of his guests as they left. Mary was the last to go, and Walter put his hand on her arm as they stood at the steps.

"I hope we have done the right thing, Mary," he said.

"Oh, Walter, do not worry. Mr. Gardner is a fine man and so is Tony. They are new men, and that is what we need."

"But they have so little experience."

"Walter, are you thinking to change your mind?"

"Oh, no, Mary." He squeezed her hand. "We don't need to go through that again. You've sold me, once and for all. I was only thinking of Sid and Frank. Wait till they hear the news. They'll land on us like a ton of bricks."

"No one is landing on me," she warned. "To those people I am not any more at home. I close the door."

She chuckled to herself and left him as someone tooted the horn in her car. He followed her out on the terrace to get a breath of air. Her car with everyone in it rolled down the driveway towards the road. The tail-light winked red as they paused before turning, and then they were gone. The muffled noise of their passage diminished in the distance. Everything was quiet, and Walter felt alone.

He looked up at the sky. The stars were bright and hard above, but over the center of town there was a dim glow of light that obscured them. It was the accumulated faint but never ending pulse of those who lived at night in gas stations and diners and in trucks parked at corners. Over them and over those who replaced them at daylight Walter felt a sudden sense of power, a sensation so immediate and acute that he almost reached out his open hand to grasp what lay on his horizon. It was his to move and disturb and upset and control. It was his to possess. The whole structure of the town depended on what he did today and tomorrow.

Walter took a deep breath. Suddenly he thought of Bill Myers and wondered if he'd ever felt this way. Bill had always seemed so

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calm and sure of himself, as if he'd been born to power and had never thought it unusual. It was to men like this that power belonged and not to people like himself. He didn't deserve it. What was he but an intruder in their world? What was he but a clever manipulator, a merchant of small change, an impostor hiding behind a figurehead? Hadn't he betrayed the Party and turned against its leaders tonight? Hadn't he enlisted his committee in a kind of conspiracy that was shameful and ignoble? Yes, Mary was right. He was nothing but a politician.

Walter's elation was gone as quickly as it had come. He blamed himself for what Bill would have said to him and he winced at the words he would have used. And yet, Bill wasn't here now. He had gone, and they were left behind to manage on their own. The others were no better than he was. Sid Bailey and Frank Romano were politicians too. They hadn't even the interest in the Party to find someone respectable and honest like Horace. All they thought of was themselves. Was he to leave the Party in their hands without a fight? Was he to hold back now because he didn't deserve this power? Perhaps no one deserved it, but someone was going to get it, he or they.

The power alone meant nothing to him any more. He smiled as he thought how he'd reached out his hand in the dark towards the town. The men in the gas stations didn't know of his existence and didn't care, and he didn't really care about theirs except that they were men like him who lived in this town like him and needed to be themselves like him. If being themselves meant to them that they had to turn away from his Party at times, that was not important. What was important was the time that might come when he or they or anyone else would look once more for the place in the world where the Party had been and would find it sold to the Baileys and Romanos and would then feel and bewail and discover that a part of their elemental soul had been lost. Because it would be lost then, and lost for good.

He had no choice. That was clear now. He had to fight them, fair or foul. It was not for himself, not for the Party, not even for any principle or belief, but because of something as deep as an instinct, as if the world revolved around a number of centers that had a certain permanence in themselves and he was caretaker of one of these. What was politics if it wasn't taking care? No one could do without it. From the town to the state to the nation it was the biggest job in the world.

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FRANK BUTLER

Amid a Place of Stone

A BLACK HEAT rushed weakness to his head, and as Steve's foot slipped from the cave's slick wall and he let go the rope and fell like a shot hawk straight to the hard mud floor of the pit, his last image was the flight of three faces—horrified in their astonishment—into the forest of carbide-lit stalactites glistening above his head. His last sound was a gasped "Wait . . . " and the last thing he heard was water, far-off and below. His last emotion was surprise (which followed fear), and his last thought was a hope that he was not being killed.

His friends, or companions, for none there knew Steve very well and his friends were not due at the cave until the next morning, were close at the ledge when he blacked-out and fell. In the darkness, they saw little. They heard the gasp, then the wet slide of his foot from its brace against the opposite wall, silence for a falling moment, a scrape and cry when he struck a passing hump, then the solider and final crunch when his fall was done. A stone tore from the side, booming and bounding down with him, and rolled briefly to a stop. His plastic helmet also went thunking after. But a crashed carbide lamp rattled the last echo across the gravel and mud floor of Steve's pit.

The innuendoes of a stony triumph filled the silence.

Arch Gooding knelt where he had been ready to grasp Steve's hand when he had climbed high enough. Steve had almost made it. Pete Foster still had the suddenly slack rope, still braced himself against the stumpy stalagmite where the rope was looped in a bowline-on-a-bight, still dangled a cigarette from his dry, startled lips. Binkley, contained, alert, as poised and private as a cat, held the carbide's light steady at that edge which Steve never quite reached.

"Lord Almighty," Arch whispered. "Steve?" he called, expecting and receiving no answer.

"Boy, oh boy. That's a long drop. Fifty feet, anyway, I'll bet," Pete whistled. "Steve! Hey, Steve! You OK, boy?" he shouted down, a skinny white hand at the side of his mouth. He waited, then sucked for life at his cigarette as the echo bounced back stupidly around him.

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"He ain't gonna answer," Binkley rasped.

"Did you hear that fall?" Arch exclaimed. "He just got too tired to hang on, I guess." He stared down. "What a god-awful crunch he made!"

Pete, tall, blond like old straw, as mild as he was weak, fumbled for hope. "Maybe it ain't so far, after all," he changed his aimless mind. "And the floor's mud, I think." He turned to his smaller, somewhat smarter friend.

"Didn't that floor look like mud to you, Arch?" His fingers leapt to twist a pimple near his lip, then another under his ear. He dug at them furiously. They were everywhere on his face.

"It's a mighty long way down, Pete, and he's out like a light."

Arch was pudgy and simple, but bright. He was a sponge, who soaked up things and squeezed them out slowly, but in friendly due course.

He deliberated. "What we going to do?"

Binkley scowled disgust. "We gonna get him out, that's what!"

Pete smiled quickly, relieved. "That's it. We have to get him out. Hell," he expanded, "We can do it. Later we'll bring him to."

Gooding shook his head. His dull reddish hair was fine and wavy. Now he became both sensible and afraid. "No stuff, Foster. Steve's heavier than any of us. And we can't climb down this wall with just this one little rope."

He thought. A finger picked at the tough skin at his thumbnail's corner, contemplatively and in control, not like Pete. "And there's nothing to do when we're down there," he added. "It's up to Jesus now, I'll bet."

Binkley's fair cruel face, handsome and remote, tightened, smiled sarcasm about his large white teeth, even and bright. "You niggers want to have a little Baptist cat-fish fry up here?—I know one thing," he challenged. "We can get our ass right on down there now to see if he's bleeding, or what."

Binkley was thirteen, small but big-boned and thick in the chest and shoulders. He was very strong, stronger than the others, and he knew he would be a powerful man one day, even before his beard came in. Binkley could not remember ever being afraid of a thing. Nor could Binkley remember ever believing in anything. Except maybe his sister.

Pete leaned over the ledge with his lamp, "Aw, Binkley, you cut out that 'nigger' stuff. I can handle you, boy, so you take it

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easy." He peered vaguely about. "I can't see a darned thing," he confessed.

Binkley stood silent, glaring, yet smiling somehow: Pete was seventeen, and tall, but a weakling in comparison, like Arch, like most of them, like the Belle Meade pretty boy who had just fallen from the rope, for that matter.

Arch looked up at Binkley in sharp consideration, scanning the hatred written there as in an alien and frightening language. He pursed his lips over his bucked teeth and worried about Steve. Arch wished Binkley were not along. He did not like him. He did not see how anyone could.

Arch looked at his watch. It was 6:20. It was one minute since Steve had fallen. But Arch did not know that. He guessed it had been at least four minutes.

"I better get the spot," Arch murmured. He crawled to Steve's knapsack propped against the wall and dug out a red electric lantern. He rolled himself back to the edge and pushed a powerful shaft of light across the floor.

"There he is!" he cried, leaning far out over the brink and holding to the rope while he aimed the beam almost straight down. Pete clambered forward, a sort of bony old dog, his palish eyes wide and his soft mouth hanging open in nervous fear, his long hair shaggy all over his face. Binkley, standing stiffly behind, moved slightly, only enough to bring the pit's floor into view. He cleared his throat.

Steve was hard to pick out in the mud and shadows, but a white face focussed their search. He had big ears, a crew cut. His fatigues blended into the darkness. A buckle gleamed. He lay sprawled as in a lanky nap, his eyes shut and mouth parted, his arms flung wide and comfortably across the flat floor. A red bruise was barely visible upon his forehead; it did not look like much. But one leg seemed oddly turned. His green Army Salvage helmet lay beside him. The smashed carbide lens caught wild light farther away, near a little water that was trickling into a calcified hole. It all looked a very long way down.

Steve's head turned, and a painless, distant groan filled the impossible pit. He was unconscious.

"Well, he's alive," Arch sighed. "Thank the Lord."

"He don't look so bad, does he?" Pete agreed. "It could be a lot worse."

"Thank *who*? Hell, he could die in ten minutes," Binkley drawled,

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unconcerned. A child, he yet comprehended the accident and its danger because he was not shocked by it, because his feelings were always nailed flat first, ruthlessly, pitilessly, by any passing fact.

"Well, damn it, Binkley," Arch countered. "We only got that one little old nylon rope, and even Steve wasn't tall enough to reach bottom from it. That's why he had to climb back up."

"Don't you see there how it's a-hangin', Arch?" Pete pointed. "Why, it ain't so far to the floor. A man could drop those ten or twelve feet. I think a man could."

"How would he get back up?" Arch asked. "And how you know it's only that far? And what if you sprained your ankle?" He shook his head again. "I just don't see how we can, Pete. I really don't."

"Poor Steve," Pete looked down, convinced. "Seems like he's in some real bad trouble." His freckled fingers searched for cigarettes. "Lord, we ought to do something."

"I told him." The voice was as dead and as lost as driftwood. "He was a fool to go down that thing without a safety." Binkley went to the rope. "Now I gotta risk my neck."

"What do you mean? You can't—" Arch began. Pete stared.

"You stupid shits." Binkley spat, classically. "You all may be older than me, but you ain't man enough to hang on to the tip of that rope and shine the light up on him, like, and then climb back up. And he weren't neither!" He grabbed the rope as he sneered for an exact and dramatic moment. "I am, though," he tagged on the foolish anti-climax.

Little Arch rose, and his plump knees shook in his clammy trousers before the grotesquely strong youth, the hard baby's face. "What did you call me?" he blurted. "I don't like you, anyway, Binkley, and I never did. So just . . . "

"I don't give a sweet-ass damn for that." He turned. "Pete, just hold this rope so's I can get down there easy-like. OK?"

"Boy, oh boy. You're sure some pisser." Pete laughed. "You just got a mess to learn before you're growed up proper, that's all." He stood up, too. "Sure, old buddy. I won't let you-all drop on your head. You're too mean to die so young."

Binkley licked his lip. "Hell, I didn't say anything. Can't you-all take a joke?" Binkley dismissed it. "Just let me have that red lantern, Arch." He grabbed it from the smaller boy, snapped it to his web belt, and started down the rope—only a thick white cord.

"Maybe I can find how to get him up here," he added half-

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apologetically as he swung himself down off the ledge, his crossed feet breaking his climb down.

Pete knelt beside the rope, and Arch held the carbide above Binkley's rapid, expert descent. They listened to his hard and even breathing.

"I just can't help it, Arch," Pete confessed, safe now. "I know it ain't right to hate people, and Lord knows I don't hate no one else."

Arch knew he would have said the same if he had spoken first. "He's just a mean squirt. Don't pay him no mind," he advised instead, his own humiliation passing with the words.

"Just a mean squirt," he repeated. "Like you told him: he might grow out of it. And he might not. I don't care. It's Whiting I'm thinking about. That was an awful, awful fall. That's what *I'm* thinking about; I tell you the truth."

Pete leaned over the cliff and watched Binkley's easy rope-climbing, down the same way Steve had gone a moment before, his efforts smooth with the joyous testing of fine muscle and a man's shoulders like no other thirteen-year-old had.

Pete whistled. "But Jesus, he's sure got guts enough, ain't he?" He cupped his hand at his mouth. "Take it easy, boy," he shouted, very loudly, "We're a-watchin' you careful."

"He don't care about Steve," Arch scorned it all. "I just don't pay that show-off no mind."

"Hell, Arch, guts is guts. I know I'm glad I ain't on that fool little nylon. And Binkley don't know Steve no better than me."

"I reckon he done the right thing, all right," Arch agreed after a while, from within a long and waiting silence. "The Lord—He has it all planned out, somehow. I guess He knows you or me couldn't do that, Pete."

Binkley had stopped. The weight and smell of suspended time filled the chamber like invisible smoke. The rope hung leaden and still. He was at its tip, swinging from the unseen line, hovering heavy and horrible, swaying black in the dark air, close over Steve's indifferent sleep like some terrible Angel of Death; the light spread under him like all the world itself, his arms like bat wings, one shining fire, one grasping into the shadows from where the rope hung, indistinguishable from the very space it cut.

Both Arch and Pete saw it. They glanced at each other like scared children. "You OK, Binkley?" Arch called down, trying to smash the mood, whatever it was.

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A pause. Binkley's powerful lantern played coolly over Steve, then all about the floor and walls. "Yeah—" he coughed out, catching his breath. "He looks bad—but there ain't no way—I'm comin' up."

The vision shattered; its heavy, timeless haze cleared in a rush of image and event. It was just Binkley, and the light was no supernatural summons, just his lantern, and he was on his way back up in jerky, regular pulls, the rope cutting deeper into the mud of the edge each time. The light from Arch's carbide twinkled a star from his helmet. They could not see Steve at all now; Binkley was much more real. He was about half-way. And he was tiring fast.

"—Gotta rest—" he gasped. "—Must be thirty feet—"

"You take it easy now, Binkley." Hoarse apprehension drenched Pete's whisper. "You rest it easy all you want, boy."

"—Rope's too goddamned skinny—hard to hold—"

"Just be still, Binkley. Breathe it deep," Arch directed.

Binkley rasped raw breaths as he swung in the air like the clapper of the bell-shaped pit. He hung high over Steve, a loose sack on an unsure cable. Then slowly, he began to climb again.

"You wait awhile, Binkley," Pete warned. "You ain't in no rush."

"Binkley—" Arch began, but stopped. It would do no good to tell Binkley to pray.

Weak, tired as stone now, Binkley climbed and hung his difficult way toward the distant ledge and the anxious, wondering young faces. Steve must have seen the three of them like this, lit by flaming acetylene, before. But Binkley knew better than to hang resting while his hot muscles chilled. He strained and inched hand over hand, his cramped feet locked into the skimpy nylon line, his crotch loving it like a woman. Sweat poured from him under his turtleneck sweater and his hair was wet in his helmet and ticklish in his armpits with rivulets and a musty stink. His thick gloves could hardly hold the thin rope. His back and butt itched with the perversion to fall, to feel the thrilling blow and pain and oblivion of solidity under him.

With cold, with even casual appraisal, Binkley simply did not see how he could make it to the top. There would be two of them below. They would not get out. He wondered whether he and Steve would die soon. He thought not. He remembered how the poor son-of-a-bitch had looked up close. But for that memory, he

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could not go on at all, would fall and hope somehow that he would not hit too hard. At least his helmet was tight and his clothes were thicker than Steve's. He did not know whether he had resigned himself to death or whether he hoped someone could eventually bring Steve and him out alive. Things were confused now and it had begun not to matter; neither death nor life seemed worth its thought.

An eager idea pulsed along his quick mind, and faded: he could climb back down and drop lightly into the pit, maybe, and wait, resting a long while. But that was out. He knew that if he could climb down twenty or thirty feet, he could make the ten or twelve feet it seemed to the top.

As Binkley rested once more, he knew that the rest did him no good, that he was weakening faster than hanging there replenished his strength, that it had been this way with Steve, while up above they had never known a thing.

He thought of his older sister, Babs, the only thing in the whole god's world he loved—just thought of her—and how he would never pitch for the Nashville Vols or the Yankees, or fly a jet, or screw a girl. Life! what bullshit it all was! Raw deals, raw deals! Tricks. Whippings. Lies. He would never get the chance to do anything he wanted anyway. He never had. He was not one of the lucky, so now there was nothing much left he really even wanted. He hoped there were not a heaven or hell; he wanted things to be over when they were over. Binkley bet they were. He knew damn well *he* did not have a soul. Church, God, the Bible: that stuff was bunk. He had got his gut good and full, and it bored him silly.

Binkley's death approached along cramped fingers, loosening them toward its tenacious sleep (for in his fall Binkley would have smashed his head and died). But that claim was postponed, to win forty-seven years later with the howls and blind staggers of bad moonshine upon a sweating cell floor in Tullahoma's county jail, where the varied sores of vanity and the life-long malignancies of hatred would lead and finally end him.

His reprieve was to become that futile a one (and before he saw the next noon), because this day when, of all his life, he would most seek to prove his worth to others, something beyond his young control, the mere complexity of events and of his shared circumstance with them, allowed him to fail. Binkley's own personal stars had indeed darkly conspired to doom his fate; for truly, from

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his birth until today he had never before had a decent chance, and he would never again.

Binkley spun into sleep like a twig in a suck-hole, then slipped down the rope—and as the skin ripped burning from his palm through a fresh tear in his glove and he heard Arch and Pete scream from above, he was awake and alive with his heart beating fast and clear. Furious feet braked the fiery line; his bleeding hands tightened, twisted with all their wrestler's strength. Suddenly—and no instant prayer or godly fear burst over his mind—he understood out of the vast unthought darkness why Steve had fallen and how he might save himself.

It was simple: as Steve had tried to pull himself over the brink, exertion and damp had blacked him out. Not just fatigue then, but the rush of blood to the head from the change of position—like in airplanes, Binkley vaguely remembered from his comic books—had dropped Steve into his pit. He would not make that mistake.

"—At the edge—you-all haul me over—OK?"

"Sure. We'll pull you in right now," Pete, stunned nearly speechless, said cheerily. The two fell to work, hauling Binkley up to about where he had been.

Through the turbulence of Binkley's clearing consciousness, something was wrong—not to get up to the top by himself, that was it.

"No—" he breathed. "—Just at the edge." He climbed on, slow and painful, but miraculously easier now, now that he knew he would make it.

At the edge he relaxed and nodded, and as Pete and Arch—such good guys—leaped, grasped his armpits and belt and hauled him roughly over the hard, muddy edge so that his ribs and thighs scraped, he went weak and black inside and nearly passed out. His throat ached with the damp gasps and his chest hurt all the way through, so hard his heart seemed beating, and his hands and crotch were burned, swollen and numb. But he had been right.

"Haw! Hey, now! That was some climb, weren't it?" Pete giggled, scared to death. "Boy, oh boy! You must be bushed." His flat, wide eyes, blue and depthless, blinked, stared at too much experience for him ever to comprehend.

He licked his lips rapidly. "You *sure* you made it?" Pete laughed again. "I gived you up when you slipped." He shook his head

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many times, punctuating the incredulous movements with "Boy, oh boy," in various over-inflections.

Binkley lay wheezing. Arch watched him.

Now the cave crowded around them. Now their mortality was mocked by rock. Now they were removed from all the sympathy with which deciduous nature comforts the brevity of man. No human had ever before lain upon these sterile terraces, nor seen this pit at their feet where Steve lay still. This was virgin of man, unviolated by fear or desire, unstroked by dream or idea. For the tunnel stretching far behind them to St. Sofia's great rock dome had been curtained all its way by slender stalactites which they had had to break—centuries at each blow—to reach the ledge where they now crouched cold and afraid. Each knew Binkley had almost joined Steve; none knew quite where they were. For the first time since Steve's fall only minutes ago, they felt the chill, the depth, the horror of Wintergreen's great cavern. In them now this shock released an inverse alchemy. Their flesh became clay and their hot sweat dank; in a while, their fires of fear sank to futile ash; gray, cool, as soft as sleep.

"You OK?" Arch ventured.

"Sure. It weren't so hard," Binkley began the necessary act. "Just there at the end, a little bit."

"Aw, I knew you could make it," Pete consoled. "Steve could, too. Only—"

"Only he didn't." Binkley's contempt seemed leisurely. He sat up briskly and slapped his arms around his sides. "I told you I would, didn't I?" He tore off his helmet, but nervously. His curly blond hair was flat and matted. "Just lemme get my breath." He hacked wetly and spat.

"Have some chocolate." Arch tossed him a bar. Binkley was badly shaken.

"You guys—!" Binkley half-scowled. He looked eighteen or so as he reached and caught the candy effortlessly out of the air. "I'm all right."

He tore it out of the wrapper and munched it richly, savoring the energy with all his tongue and mouth. "Thanks," he mumbled. "But I don't need it, or anything." The child was with them, as petulant as his age.

"Want another?"

"No!"

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"Orange?" Arch was smiling now, his buck teeth making it worse—a clown's ridicule. And Pete laughed.

"Just you shut up, Arch Gooding!" Binkley caught himself. Instantly, out of his wild and bitter darkness, out of that obscure pride and the murderous naivete of his hill-country heart, the alien suspicions of his archaic young mind, he hated these older city boys. For a moment, they had seen right through him. For a moment, they had forced an anger from him which had lost him his special pride of distance.

"You want to hear about Steve, or not?" His remembering eyes narrowed like bright stormy slits in a thunderstorm sky. But it was into his own near-death that he seemed to stare, fascinated, horrified.

"He don't look like he's bleeding," he said. "But there ain't no way we can get to him without that stuff we left in St. Sofia. It's a bad pit, shaped just like a bell."

The others waited as he paused, recalling his fear. "There ain't no way. Not without the long rope ladder and plenty of safety lines. He looks real awful."

Binkley shifted, was suddenly proud of his information. "I told you-all," he finished, with a little spite to drug his memory.

"Oh, shut up, Binkley," Arch snapped. "You're always right. Is that it?"

Binkley smiled and shrugged. "What next then?" he asked pleasantly.

"Well, we'll just go right back there and get that stuff," Pete said. "That's exactly what we'll do."

"Don't see why," Binkley remarked with calm irony, still tired more than he would show. "That Steve Whiting is really out. Maybe for good."

He let that sink in. "We can't get him up here by ourselves. There ain't no way on earth, I tell you."

"But with that rope and tackle stuff, couldn't we at least get down to him?" Arch, stunned, fervently searched for answers anywhere. "Anything we can do . . . "

"Hell fire! I just told you, didn't I?" They stared at him. "So what if we could get down there with all that gear? I got down without it, didn't I? But so what?" They still stared at him, puzzled.

"Aw, you jerks don't see nothing!" It all seemed so clear to Binkley, like water in a glass he held out to them, a genuine amazement

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only tinted by his inky streaks of malice. He remembered how impossible life had looked down there, how sad and final Steve had lain there, and how nearly he, without fear or very much regret even, had loosed himself to fall and join him. Why could they not see what was necessary? Action came so easily to him—the simplest of life's demands, for Binkley.

"We can't do just 'anything,' " he exclaimed, thinking something through. Then, "You two gotta get out of Wintergreen and get help—lots of it. Forget our gear."

A monstrous image, half fear, half pride, swam over and engulfed him. "I'll wait in the dark here," it spoke through his lips. "Because —because you chickens just couldn't."

Something very pained and very lonely in his voice—a childish break somewhere along the intolerable insult—held the other boys silent. He spoke again in a half-apology, his heart and pride in another land, where it was not necessary to fight everyone in the world the live-long day: "Besides, you all know the cave a lot better than me. I don't mind this old dark." He attempted a smile.

"You're nuts!" Arch burst. "You can't wait here all the time we'll need. That's four or five hours. Can't nobody do that and stay sensible."

Arch knew that Steve had carried all their surplus carbide supply down with him into the pit. The wait would be entirely in the dark. "I don't mind staying myself, no more than you—with a light," he added.

"That's just the difference between us, I guess. You know damn well we ain't got enough carbide no more."

"Steve will be about as well-off down there alone while we all go for help as with you waiting around up here, Binkley," Pete commented.

"It ain't right to leave him alone. It's that simple. Somebody's got to stay. You all know that, no matter what you say. Don't think I want to."

He stood, ending it. "I'll keep a light here and a little supply for if I really have to get down to him or—anything."

"Well, don't go messing around that edge," Pete warned. Binkley's plan was accepted.

"OK, Binkley. We won't get back before 10:30, even if we have good luck—real good." Arch hoisted his pack to his back. "We'll go all the way to the Ornley place—they have a phone."

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He paused as he turned to Binkley and his face hesitated; a troublesome emotion pulled across it. "This is mighty fine, Ralph. More'n I could do for Steve, I reckon."

There was no answer, for a moment. Binkley was deciding.

"Bull shit. That country club kid's nothing to me. Somebody's got to wait around, that's all. And you babies are just wasting good time with all your big-deal hero talk." But he looked away.

"Have it your own stinking way," Arch shrugged. "Let's go, Petey."

Arch ducked and turned into the low tunnel. Pete followed. They were quickly out of sight.

Binkley stood, alone now, dazed by thoughts of death. For a long time, he beamed the light down the corridor after Arch and Pete.

"See you guys," Ralph Binkley called. "Be careful!"

He blew out the lamp and sat down in the blackest darkness in the world. He hated it. After a while you saw things, he had heard. He shook with fear from toe to lip.

Binkley figured he could take it. This should prove who was really Steve's friend, and Binkley knew very well what Steve and the others thought of him. He wished he did not care. Damn them! They were all like everybody and no one understood anything.

"Don't get no gray hairs, Binkley," Pete's high whine cut through the dark, as his now distant light reflected a last dim time upon the cluster of stalactites above the pit and drop-off. "And watch out for the Little Men!"

Arch called out something, something friendly, lost to Binkley in its own echoes and in the tunneling ring of Pete's laughter.

They were gone and they could not matter less. But he counted. He would watch over Steve, just as he had been the one to go down after him. Just because he was tough, tougher than any of them, they thought he did not have any feelings. Binkley wished to hell he really was mean; it would be simpler. But now, maybe he wouldn't seem such a bad guy. Or they might decide he was as cold as ice. At least that would settle things, too.

Ralph Binkley sat and figured that the four or five hours of dark and fear, which now approached upon him, would be worth it to him, somehow.

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CHARLES TOMLINSON

Flame

Threshing from left to right, whose
    Anger is this? Or whose delight?
For it is volatile like thought, stained-through like mind
    With odour and reminiscence of those seams
Darker and deeper than its shifting scope.
    The mind, that rooted flame
Reaches for knowledge as the flame for hold—
    For shapes and discoveries beyond itself. A slow
Crescendo of crepitations through orange music,
    It mines in its element, shines-out its ores.

The Gorge

Wind in the fleece of ivy
As, from above, the pilot
Sees water, moved by its currents.

But we are closer: he would miss
Such evident ripples
Like a conflagration
Climbing the rockface.

Light, swept perpendicular
Into the leaf-mass
Flickers out, only to reappear momentarily
Stippling remoter clumps.

The movement deceives, a surface
For silence, inaccessible
Inactivity. Even the sea
Shifts to its centre.

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WILLIAM ALFRED

Apollo's Defense of Prometheus

It was the coldness that he hated most;
It made him feel this distance difficult.
He saw one sometimes, looking blind and lost,
Make for another like a new-cast colt
Only to be stopped dead by the frost.
It was not that he pitied them. He knew
How slim the chances were they felt like us,
That "blind and lost" were words not strictly true
When used of them. Nor had he animus
Against us. No. He simply grew engrossed.

He knew this sense of distance is our right
And ours alone. That I will not deny.
But how was he to know that heat and light
He stole for them from us should scarify
Those makeshifts of us, that the gift of sight
Once granted, we must quench the eye,
A thing unthinkable, or be besought
Eternally for what not you nor I
Can give: that distance be unwrought,
The bit of chaos and the curb of night.

Remember when that flickering in the air
First burned the blackness off each frozen sod
In their flat fields below. You met my stare
With laughter. And that glimpse of clod with clod
Pretending to communion was quite rare,
Huddled there like seeds within a pod.
Your laughter was soon followed by despair
When distance struck them like a brought down rod
And they began this begging us to spare,
Spare them from what has kept us each a god.

The insult of their ignorant petition
Has crazed me. It has made my life a waste.

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Proportion totters. Music and condition
Starves for denial in me. Bleak coition
With all that I am not has so replaced,
So broken and transformed me with contrition
My singing stumbles in its virile haste—
I first condemned him to that long perdition,
Flayed clean by eagles, and still not defaced—
How can that pain have now grown my ambition?

Look at them moving in the fields below.
See, there is one with hair like rain-drenched bark,
Its hue and strength. She moves like lifted snow
And in her eyes is that light-troubling dark
You see in groves in spring. My blood moves slow
In envy of her slowness. I turn shark
And breast this distance like an undertow
Full at her, with the mind in me gone stark,
For what I want I do not care to know:
It changes with her like a windblown spark.

Release him from that frozen mountain range
Into this pain we feel, in which we change,
And yet remain the same. No eagle's beak
Is sharper than this pain of which I speak.
The sense of distance tears my strength in two:
My heart recoils, a dead rose shot with dew.
We must grow one with all that we have made,
And that with joy, although we are afraid.

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RUTH FAINLIGHT

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman

After lunch. I lay my papers out, but more than that
Is needed for the change. I seek a stronger spell
Or some more potent ritual to nullify the fact
The house is clean at last; my stockings washed;
The simple satisfaction that I must deny
To empty occupations, grasping practicality.

I think there must be many such, stranded between Gretchen
And the masquerading boys, who like their stockings clean
Yet hate each feminine diversion and success.
Whether an artist can be a young woman
Is the first question: perhaps even the wish is wrong;
Denial and failure; how change myself, and why?

Nevertheless, I try. Surely something of value will come
And I shall speak for all men, of love and death
And of despair; not only that indifferent apathy
When life has lost its hard-won transient meaning
We all know; but my personal despair
Of ever breaking through the swaddling bands.

Hard; hard. Hard to enter the furnace daily
When body traps, deludes, and softens the will.
Hard to take something soft and forge it hard.
In the heart of the flames unity stands like an angel,
But fearful flesh lowly breathes its own lure.
Very hard to achieve a synthesis on such terms.

Do I hope for too much, and yet, really complacent,
Is my idea of the limits an abandoned square in the town,
My struggles planned to keep my stockings clean?
Perhaps I am wrong again. My brain teems with arguments,
And is numbed by the arguments. When I am weak
I am jealous, and long for the simple problems of men.

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But then, doubly blessed, I have two strengths:
For that mild, unthinking pleasure when the gentle world
Smiles sunlight and flowers is not negation;
Lapped in blood-heat, mind beats to another rhythm.
I spring renewed from such times. The terrible truths
Forgotten, can again be faced,

And are not necessarily terrible.
This second strength, joy of the spirit, fierce and intense,
Is hardly my own. Leaving the fetters of chance
I leave myself, and see the world as one of many worlds,
And all are me, and I am nothing in the smallest stone
Yet singing bravely.

GEOFFREY HILL

The White Ship

Where the living with effort go,
or with expense, the drowned wander
easily: seaman
and king's son also

who, by gross error lost,
drift, now, in salt crushed
polyp- and mackerel-fleshed
tides between coast and coast,

submerge or half-appear.
This does not much matter.
They are put down as dead. Water
silences all who would interfere;

retains, still, what it might give
as casually as it took away:
creatures passed through the wet sieve
without enrichment or decay.

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EARL MINER AND ROBERT H. BROWER

Translations from the Japanese

KAKINOMOTO HITOMARO (7th century A. D.)

On Discovering the Body of a Man Lying Among the Stones on the Island of Saminé in Sanuki Province—

O the precious land of Sanuki,
Resting where seaweed glows like polished gems!
Perhaps for its precious nature
I never tire in my gazing on it,
Perhaps for its holy name
It is the most divine of sights.
It will flourish and endure
Together with the heavens and earth,
With the shining sun and moon,
For through successive ages it has come down
That the landface is the face of a god.

Having rushed our ship upon the breakers
From the busy port of Naka,
We came rowing steadily until the wind
That rises with the shifting tides
Stormed down from the dwelling of the clouds—
Looking back upon the open sea,
I saw waves gather in their mounting surges,
And looking off beyond the prow,
I saw the white waves dashing on the surf.

In awe of the terrible sea,
Where whales are hunted down as prey,
We clutched the steering oar,
Straining the plunging ship upon its course;
And though here and there
We saw the scattered island coasts
To dash upon for safety,
We sought haven on rugged Saminé,

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The isle so beautiful in name.
Erecting a little shelter, we looked about,
And then we saw you:
Pillowed upon your shaking beach,
Using those wave-beaten rocks
As if the coast were spread out for your bedding;
On such a rugged place
You have laid yourself to rest.

If I but knew your home,
I would go to tell them where you sleep;
If your wife but knew this home,
She would come here searching for you,
But knowing nothing of the way—
The way straight as a courtier's spear—
How must she be waiting,
How anxiously now longing for you,
She the dear one you called wife.

Envoys

If your wife were here,
She would be out gathering your food,
She would pick the greens
From the hillslopes of Saminé—
But is their season not now past?

So you rest your head
Pillowed on the rocky, spread-out bedding
Of this rugged shore,
While the furious, wind-driven surf
Pounds ever in from off the sea.

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Yamanoe Okura (?659-?733)

Lament on the Instability of Human Life

Life is such in this world
That our struggles are all in vain:
Years rise on months
And time flows ever onward,
Flooding us away;
A hundred trivial concerns
Oppress us in succession
And stifle us under their weight.

So women bent with age
Once rejoiced in being young—
"Carefree girls binding,
As girls are ever known to do,
Binding their foreign jewels
About their gaily draped arms"—
They waved white linen sleeves,
Trailing the hems of their scarlet skirts
As hand in hand they went,
Spending their time in happy play,
And all were girls together.
But time has the power of seasons,
And irresistibly
Summer has given way to winter,
As at an unremembered hour
Those glistening tresses so black,
"Jet as the mud-snail's bowels,"
Were whitened with a silent frost;
As from some source unmarked,
Those cheeks that glowed so bright,
Those scarlet cheeks,
Were wrinkle-scratched by time.

So the bold young men
Rejoiced to prove their manliness:
Like warriors girded their hips
With their straight or curving swords,

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Clutched tightly in their hands
Their deadly, beast-destroying bows,
Threw upon their roans
Saddles of woven workmanship,
Climbed upon their mounts,
And eagerly galloped away to the hunt.

But is the way of the world
Such that these moments could long endure?
The girls whose eager hands
Slide ajar the creaking door to love,
Clasp the groping hands
With precious, jewel-like outstretched hands—
Clasping—and then to sleep
With dear arms intertwined; but youth
Knows few such nights
And soon must lean upon the staff
Bound henceforth to the side,
And then go stumbling ever onward,
Scorned by the passer-by,
He must go stumbling endlessly,
Despised by passing crowds.
For such is the common course of life
That this should be,
Not more or less, so pitiable is life:
No greater in its span
Than the length of hand to grip the wrist,
And our struggles are all in vain.

Envoy

How I yearn to be
Unalterably what once I was,
Immovable as a rock,
But because I belong to this world,
There is no stop to time.

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EARLE ERNST

"A Theatre . . . of Beauty Without Tears"

SINCE THE JAPANESE NO THEATRE has preserved, almost unchanged, the methods of production, the style of acting, the music, and the plays which it evolved toward the end of the fourteenth century, it is probably the only highly-civilized theatre in the world today which can give a modern audience a fairly accurate re-creation of its earliest productions. The No performance today is somewhat less free and more conventionalized than it was originally, but its audience is in much the same position as a contemporary British audience would be if it were able to see plays of the Chester cycle performed with much the same language, costumes, and movement used in 1400.

The various elements out of which the No was synthesized have an even earlier origin. Among these was *sangaku* (the word can possibly be translated as "informal music"), a combination of music, dancing, and sometimes jugglery, probably imported into Japan in the early eighth century from Korea and China. The effort has been made to trace its origin ultimately, and laboriously, to India. Among the native materials which contributed to the No, the two principal ones seem to have been *dengaku* ("farm-house music"), a folk-dance ritual associated with rice planting and harvesting, and *kagura*, a religious dance performed at shrines of the native religion, Shinto. By the middle of the fourteenth century the word *sangaku* had been corrupted to *sarugaku* ("monkey music"), and we hear of performances of *sarugaku-nō* and *dengaku-nō*, the use of the word *nō*, which means "accomplishment" or "ability," implying that the performers were professionals rather than amateurs. After the middle of the fourteenth century, *sarugaku* began to absorb *dengaku*, as well as other native mimetic and musical materials, and troupes of professional actors were generally known as performers of *sarugaku* No. The more important of the troupes were usually attached to Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, the actors frequently priests of low rank, but even such troupes were not above touring the provinces, giving benefit performances before the most ordinary audiences. In fact, these troupes seem to have been engaged about equally in money-making and in propagandizing for their shrines and temples.

The present No theatre, if the beginnings of this art can be ascribed a date, derives from the innovations and refinements wrought by a father and son, Kannami (1333-1384) and Zeami (1363-1443), upon the *sarugaku* No. Kannami, the leader of one of the four principal troupes which performed for festivals at the Kasuga Shrine at Nara, was a thorough showman, capable of playing before audiences of farmers or of nobles and adjusting his performance to the tastes of both. It was doubtless the desire to please his audience that led him to add new elements to the extant *sarugaku*

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and thus give it much the same form which the No has today. He accomplished this revolution by placing greater emphasis upon the rhythm of the musical accompaniment, and he made considerable changes in plot and acting by borrowing elements from a dance called *kusemai*, in which the dancer mimed as well as chanted the history of a priest or of a temple. Kannami's innovations would probably have been less influential had he not had the good luck, at a shrine in Kyoto in 1374, to have in his audience Yoshimitsu (1358-1408), the temporal ruler of Japan. Yoshimitsu, delighted with the performance, particularly with that of Kannami's twelve-year-old son, Zeami, established the troupe in his palace. Thereafter, until the death of Yoshimitsu, these players enjoyed the position of being the foremost *sarugaku* actors in the country, and their methods of production and style of acting, admired and imitated by less fortunate troupes, came to be widely influential.

Despite Kannami's desire and ability to please audiences of the lowest social level, he must have had a strong artistic sense—without it he could not have attracted the attention of that remarkable aesthete Yoshimitsu. But Kannami learned his craft in what was almost a commercial theatre, and he enjoyed the benefits of Yoshimitsu's patronage and highly refined taste for only ten years before his death. Zeami, on the contrary, who inherited his father's position as leader of the troupe, grew to maturity in an atmosphere of the most rarefied aesthetic sensibility. He wrote plays, and of the current repertoire of some 240 pieces, about 100 are attributed to him. But he also wrote, over a period of some thirty years, a remarkable series of essays about *sarugaku* No. (The term was not abbreviated to *nō* until after his death.) These are extraordinary theatre documents not only in that they are the oldest complete statements of an actor concerning his art and his theories of acting that have come down to us, but also because they were not equalled in their sophisticated and subtle discussion of acting until the modern work of Stanislavsky. (The *Bharata nātya śāstra*, probably of the third century A.D., deals less with the acting of the Indian theatre than with production and dramatic theory.) When Zeami writes of "intuitive perception," and "becoming the part," or discusses the elaborate, lengthy process of becoming a great actor, his words have a striking modernity, though obviously the kind of acting he was describing was quite unlike that exhibited in the West today.

Zeami's aesthetic of acting and of production was posited on Zen, a form of Buddhism which conceives contemplation, *zen*, as the means of attaining freedom from the phenomenal world and achieving mystical insight into ultimate reality. To attempt an explanation of Zen is foolhardy, for by its very nature it cannot be expressed in words, can be understood only by intuition, and can be transmitted only from "heart to heart." The effect of Zen upon the Japanese arts is fortunately somewhat less abstruse and is graphically demonstrated in the work of the painters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. At the risk of falsifying the aesthetic of Zen by simplification, it may be said that it bears analogies with Platonic forms and archetypes. The Zen artists sought to capture the essential

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forms which underlay the multiplicity of external appearances. Generally eschewing the use of color, they painted in monochrome, for, among other reasons, they found color inimical to form, obscuring sharp outlines and creating a "liveliness" which suggested rather than eliminated the phenomenal world. They wished, on the contrary, to arrive at the statement of quietude possible when the agitations on the surface of actuality have reached an equilibrium and the essential form of objects emerges in an aura of timelessness. The description of a picture as "quiet" was the highest critical praise. The Zen artists did not paint abstractly; they did not ignore, break up, or fragment natural forms. Their process was rather one of constant reduction, in which objects were depicted with an austere economy of line. Their basic artistic concepts were selectivity, reduction to essential forms (consequently, a nonrealistic treatment of time and space), and the creation of a tranquil, generally static, mood.

Not all the aesthetic principles of the Zen artists were transferred bodily to the No performance. The No, for example, did not proscribe the use of color: its costumes glow richly. But, like the graphic arts, it made an artistic virtue of restriction and reduction. The No stage is a bare platform, usually without scenic indications of place. Properties are used sparingly and only when they can be given a more than literal meaning. The actor, wearing a theatricalized version of fourteenth-century court dress, moves in the patterns of sculpture come to a tentative life, his face either masked or expressionless. The number of characters is sharply restricted. There are only two important roles in most No plays: the *shite* (pronounced "shtay"), the principal character, and the *waki*, the secondary one. Each of these may have followers (*tsure*), but such characters are usually not in themselves individuals, being only vocal and physical extensions of the principal characters. Dramatically, the No play tends to be a two-character play, and structurally it comes close to being a one-character play. The *shite* and the *waki* are not protagonist and antagonist, for there is seldom any conflict between them. And even when they stand opposed, the sense of conflict is diminished by substituting a dance by the *shite* for dramatic confrontation. The importance of the *shite* is further increased by his being given the best lines, the most poetic passages. Nonetheless, the *shite* does not emerge as a three-dimensional character, for he is subject to the same artistic reduction as the other elements of the No theatre.

Perhaps it is misleading to speak of the *shite* and the *waki* as characters, for they have little in common with those persons inhabiting the Western theatre whose complexity permits the revelation of new facets of personality to successive generations. The allegorical characters of the late medieval French and English morality plays are probably the closest Western approximation to the figures of the No, but even these, in performance, must have displayed considerably more vitality and humanness than the tenuous beings evoked on the No stage. The quality of these lightly sketched creations derives from the aesthetic and, in a certain sense, the religious quality of the No plays, which are a distillation of human experience to its essence, as this essence is reflected in Buddhist philosophy.

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Thus the No performance in its style of production and its conception of drama seems remote from and even antithetical to the theatre of the West. Yet it may be observed that all dramatic art, anywhere in the world, tends toward selectivity and the elimination of the nonessential. Even the realistic theatre of the West has found it necessary to limit the materials which it places upon the stage, to restrict the length of the play, to control the involution of character. But while the Western theatre has tended to regard a bare platform, a lack of scenery, the inhibition of movement and of characterization as restrictions upon expressiveness, the No conceived these as positive artistic values. Even Shakespeare could express impatience with his unworthy scaffold and wooden O, and ask his audience to "piece out our imperfections with your thoughts." Perhaps it could be shown that the theatre of the West has inevitably moved toward piecing out its imperfections by an increasing literality and that the film represents the greatest achievement, to date, of this effort. Only occasionally in the history of the Western theatre has there been a conscious attempt to arrest this process by strict limitations upon the materials used by the theatre artist. The paradox of the Western movement in the theatre is that the more the appetite for realism was satisfied, the more restricted—in subject matter, in characters, in movement in time and space—the theatre became.

By choosing an artistic path leading in the opposite direction, the No theatre rejected all attempts at literal representation. And so the No stage remains a stage, never losing its spatial identity, never hiding its beautifully polished surface of Japanese cypress, which gently reflects the sculptural figure of the actor. It has never occurred to the performers to speak disparagingly of it as unworthy, for it provides all that a good actor could ask of a stage: the opportunity for making impressive entrances and exits, the ability to be seen in the round by the audience, close rapport with musicians and chorus, and freedom from involvement with scenery and scenic effects.

The actor makes his entrance from the mirror room, where he has stood before a full-length mirror in order to enter into the character by studying its reflected image. The curtain of the mirror room is lifted by backstage assistants, and the actor moves onto the bridge, an area about six feet wide, varying in length from 33 to 52 feet. The bridge, like the stage proper to which it leads, is roofed, even though the entire acting area is within a larger building, for the No stage was originally set in the open, the important members of the audience viewing the performance from an adjacent building, while those less favored sat or stood in the open air near the stage. The rear wall of the stage proper also recalls the outdoor No stage, for on it is painted a stylized pine tree, a reminder, it is said, of the pine trees behind the stage at the Kasuga shrine in Nara where Kannami played. The out-of-doors persists in a strip of white pebbles in front of the stage and the bridge, and in the three small pine trees, equidistantly placed in this area before the bridge.

Almost in slow motion, for there are no rapid movements in the No,

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the actor moves toward the stage proper, an area some eighteen feet square. Here he pauses beside the roof-supporting pillar where the bridge joins the stage, to the right of the drummers and the flute player seated in the upstage area. The pillar is called the pillar of the principal character, the area to the side of it the name-saying-seat, although frequently the character who tells, standing in this place, who he is, where he has come from, and where he is going, is not the principal character but the subordinate one. The actor's next movement is normally toward the front of the stage, and since the principal character can see but poorly through the narrow slits of his mask, he guides himself by looking at the downstage pillar, which has therefore been named "the pillar on which the eye is fixed" or "the facing pillar." On the opposite side of the stage from this is the *waki's* pillar, so named because in many plays the subordinate character takes a position in its vicinity at the time the principal character makes his entrance. To the actor's left, as he faces the audience, is an area about four feet wide on which are seated the six or more members of the chorus who have made their entrance through a low door in the upstage corner of the stage. This door is also used by lesser characters, for only the principal character and the subordinate one, together with the attendants who may accompany them, make their entrances upon the bridge.

The rarely-used scenic devices are not in most instances constructions which resemble literal objects. A boat is reduced to a kind of diagrammatic outline of its form. A tomb may be suggested by four upright poles topped with greenery. A well is indicated by the outlines of a cube. Such pieces, called "fictional things," do not actually occupy space in the manner of the objects of the realistic theatre, but rather surround a given space with a sketch, or rather an *aperçu*, of the literal object. Stripped of its external attributes, the natural object appears in its basic, essential form, indicated only by outlines, and expressing, indirectly, the unsubstantiality and evanescence of reality.

Some of the sparingly-used properties have a similar sketch-like quality. The most frequently used, characteristic one is the folding fan, which, closed, partially closed, or open, serves as any object suggested by its form or by its manipulation. The fan may be a sword, a lantern, a tray, or it can be made completely nonliteral by the actor to convey such ideas as the falling of rain or of snow. Other properties tend to resemble literal objects, although they appear in idealized form. A rake is theatricalized by its handle being wrapped in white paper, its enlarged prongs painted gold; a bundle of firewood becomes a small, neat construction of twigs, decorated on both ends with flowers. None of these properties, however, even such real-looking ones as baskets, drums, or Buddhist rosaries, is used in a completely realistic fashion. They are extensions of the character who uses them rather than objects in their own right. A twig of bamboo carried by a bereaved mother is the visible sign of her insanity. A demon is recognized both by his wig and mask and by a kind of baton he holds which has no meaning apart from his figure. Only rarely does a property exist in its own right apart from the character. In the play *Aoi-no-Ue*, the Princess Aoi,

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made ill by a spiteful demon, is created not by an actor but by a kimono laid on the stage floor. In *Utō*, the hat of the dead bird-hunter, when placed at the front of the stage, is the sign of the birds he hunted.

The limitation of properties, the scarcity of scenic elements, and the consequently almost bare stage of the No theatre suggest similarities with the "platform" stage of the West, particularly that of the Shakespearean theatre. It is true that the spatial identification of the Shakespearean forestage could be established by the words of the actor as is that of the No stage. It is also true that the Shakespearean forestage, like the No stage, could be divided into spatially disparate areas, widely separated in actual space, so that, for instance, the tents of Richard III and of Richmond could be set side by side. But in other respects these stages were quite differently conceived. The Shakespearean forestage was surrounded by an ambiance of actuality set up by the inner stages in which furniture was placed, by the doors onto the forestage and the windows above them which could be given literal identification, and by the facade of the scene house which must have strongly suggested the world of actuality. The force of these relatively explicit areas flowed, as it were, into the forestage and made it part of a theatrically, and aesthetically, realistic whole. Then too, the relation of the forestage to the other acting levels seems to have been one in which vertical dimensions corresponded closely to those of actual space: Romeo descends "the cords" to the forestage, Antony is heaved aloft to Cleopatra. In the No theatre, on the contrary, no such sense of actual space is created. Unlike the three-dimensional doors to the Shakespearean forestage, the curtained entrance to the bridge cannot be translated into solid architecture.[1] It is a conventional entrance, not realistically related to the bridge or to the offstage area. Nor is the upstage area conceived realistically, for it is occupied not by the actor but by the musicians and the stage assistants. No realistic use is made of levels; in the few plays in which low platforms appear they are used for decorative effect. Although the Shakespearean forestage could be divided into disparate areas, this practice was not usual; the No stage shows such a division more often than not. At the beginning of the typical No play the subordinate actor, after stopping at the name-saying-seat, moves a few steps to the center of the stage and announces his arrival at a spot some distance from that which he previously occupied. In the principal dance which concludes the No play, realistic considerations of space are entirely suspended in a manner apparently unknown to the Shakespearean theatre. Furthermore, the space of the No stage is always used by the actor in a conventionalized pattern, and the actor is loath to use all of it, restricting himself in movement as he does in gesture and attitude. But there is every indication that the Shakespearean actor moved freely about the forestage, a much larger area than that available to the No actor, and that he tried, as does the contemporary

[1] Some of the stage directions in Arthur Waley's *The Nō Plays of Japan* (New York' 1922 and 1952) indicate a realistic conception of the entrance, such as the door of an inn; but a curtain cannot become a door, even a Japanese one, and this three-dimensional effect is not conveyed in performance.

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Western actor, to "take stage." In brief, space on the No stage tends to be treated nonrealistically and theatrically, with the same restraint as is shown in the other elements of the performance.

Despite this freedom from realistic spatial considerations, place is of tremendous importance to the No theatre. This fact is attested to by the scripts of the extant No plays and by Zeami's advice to the playwright that a play based upon original material has greater chance of success if it is set in a well-known or historical place. Zeami was aware that his countrymen, like the present-day Japanese, had a consuming interest, much greater than that of Westerners, in the spots where notable happenings had occurred. In the majority of the No plays the subordinate character, who enters first, is and has been traveling, and the beginning of the play conveys a sense of free, casual movement. The *waki* is often simply "suddenly minded" to go to a certain place, and the audience is given a panoramic, almost cinematic view of the places through which he has passed. He comes upon the principal character, a person unknown to him, by what seems a chance encounter at his destination, frequently a temple or shrine. It is only when the meeting occurs that the play really begins, so that, in fact, place crystallizes the drama.

The Japanese classification of the plays results in five principal groups: "congratulatory" plays, warrior plays, woman plays, plays of obsession and mental derangement, plays about demons. And each of these groups is further divided and subdivided. The traditional No performance consisted of the presentation of a play from each of the groups, in the above order, with comic interludes (*kyōgen*) played between them, but today the usual program consists of two plays and a comic interlude. Looked at apart from the esoteric and somewhat inconsistent Japanese classification (among the woman plays, for instance, are some in which a man plays the principal role), the No plays are actually of only two types: those which are set entirely in the "real" world, and those which involve the appearance of an apparition or a supernatural being. The plots of the former are concerned largely with the meetings of long separated parents and children, or brothers and sisters, usually brought about by a priest but at times by a deity. The majority of the plays belong to the latter group, and are the ones most frequently performed. Plays of this sort are almost invariably divided into two parts. In the first part the *waki*, often a monk or a priest, meets the *shite* at a place of special significance. They speak of what happened there in the past, and the *shite*, appearing to be an ordinary, even innocuous person, reveals a rather unusual knowledge of the event. The *shite* then exits. During a short interlude he changes costume and mask and reappears for the second part in what might be described as his basic identity. In his first appearance the Japanese call him the "before"-*shite*, in his second the "after"-*shite*. There is often a complete contrast between the two, so that they are entirely different roles. The *shite* may first be a beautiful girl, then a serpent; an old village woman, then a demon; a boy, then the spirit of a warrior.

After his second appearance the *shite*, with the help of the chorus, gives

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an account of his essential being, climaxed by his principal dance. A hunter dances his killing of birds in life and the punishment he now suffers in hell for this sin. The woman who in life had an illicit passion for a priest reveals her demonic nature by wearing the mask of a demon and a costume of stylized pattern representing the scales of a snake. The great warrior relives his last battle. All such characters are chained to their earthly passions, which continue to bind them to the world of actuality and prevent their attainment of Nirvana. It is the priest or monk who can pray for the repose of the spirit. Because he understands the inevitable likeness of all living things, the priest receives requests for deliverance and enlightenment not only from the spirits of human beings but also from the snow, the wisteria, or a butterfly. These shades and apparitions are unsubstantial evocations of the remembrance of life which haunts the tortured spirit.

The area of dramatic activity of the No play shows the same remoteness from the world of actuality as the physical techniques with which it is performed. In this respect the No script also shows the influence of Zen, for Zen concerns itself with release from the exigencies of time and place, and the No play exists in a shadowy realm at the edge of life. Even the language and the untranslatable literary devices of the plays reveal a similar ambiguity of movement in time and space. It is difficult to think of Western plays which move in a comparable region. Yeats experimented in the form of the No, and Maeterlinck in such plays as *The Intruder* and in his essays suggested a similar theatre. The Western theatre has concerned itself almost wholly with the here and now, and its fearsome ghosts and apparitions are not figures of central interest; they appear only to influence behavior in the world of actuality. (Zeami insisted that the apparitions not be terrifying, but beautiful, and he conceived these two qualities to be mutually exclusive.) Western drama displays human activity in the complex, multiple movement of the character, rarely in the reduction of the life of man to a single point where the now and the hereafter meet and where a single palliative will soothe the anguish of the tortured spirit. Western tragedy establishes a focal point in actual time and its hero is caught up in life's fitful fever. The *shite* illustrates the necessity for escape from this world, the desirability of being done with that part of living which still clings to him. When Oedipus is at last received by the gods, when Macbeth's head is brought on the stage by Macduff, the drama is finished. In the context of the No it has just begun. If the entire past of the No play is reconstructed, it frequently reveals all the conflict, struggle, pain, and bloodshed of the most agitated and lurid melodrama. But none of this appears in the theatre. The actual events are faded and distant; only the essence of the experience of living remains. As he appears on the bridge, the *shite* seems drawn into being from a far-off world of history, legends, and phantoms. He sometimes comes to fuller "realization" in the second part of the play (though at times this part is the dream of the *waki*), but at the end the transient vision of his figure fades. He is not an individual, but the shade of remembered emotion. If the spirit of Oedipus were to come again to the temple at Colonus and tell of his great moment

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of horror, or if the ghost of Macbeth were to recount his sufferings in hell and to relive in dance the murder of Duncan, the nature of the piece would be close to the No and to the sphere of theatrical activity which Maeterlinck described as "*the truly tragic in life [which] begins only at the moment when what are called adventures, sorrows, and dangers have passed.*"

In performance the No theatre creates the effect, emanating from the central figure of the actor, of a quasi-animate, quasi-inanimate surface that one associates with the graphic arts but seldom with the theatre, a surface which, like the role of the *shite*, both man and spirit, involves both life and death. The inanimate, even deathlike mask worn by the *shite* is given a subtle, momentary life by the actor, while the faces of the unmasked actors are so rigidly expressionless that they assume the quality of masks. The voice does not reproduce the sounds of colloquial speech but moves lyrically in a region between speech and chant, functioning as a musical instrument rather than as part of the actor's personality. An actor playing a female role does not change his voice in range or pitch, but suggests femininеness, as a violinist might, through the quality of his tone. The unison chanting of the chorus is an equally impersonal and formal voice which may tell the actor's thoughts, or, when he is dancing, speak his lines. The gesture is grave, restrained, avoiding any suggestion of warm-blooded life. Zeami warned the prospective playwright not to write scenes in which reunited parents and children display their tearful emotions, for the connoisseur would find such scenes disgusting in their literalness. The actor's gesture shows a like consideration for the sensibilities of the audience. The actor moves slowly, more slowly than he did in Zeami's time, but his most important moments of expression are conveyed by a static attitude which, like sculpture, suggests "motionless activity." Even his movement, like that of a figure in slow-motion film, reveals more of the human body in motion than can be observed in actuality. His movement is of course dance, but it is dance using traditional stylization, so tranquil and unlifelike that it gives time for the imagination of the audience to play about its suggestive images. The No therefore shows greater affinities with the graphic arts than does any contemporary Western form of theatre. All art strives to exist outside time and to overcome the tyranny of space. Like the graphic arts the No has conquered time and space and used them for its own aesthetic ends. It is the sort of theatre which Maeterlinck envisioned: "a theatre of peace, and of beauty without tears."

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THOMAS BARBOUR

Beckett and Ionesco

THE RECENT PRODUCTION of *Endgame* at the Cherry Lane Theatre came much closer to being a definitive presentation of Samuel Beckett than the *Waiting for Godot* of two seasons back. For one thing, the Cherry Lane approximates more than any Broadway theatre, not only the physical dimensions, but also something of the intellectual climate of those pocket-sized, Left Bank playhouses for which Mr. Beckett writes. Both of these plays involve small casts and extremely simple, indeed austere, settings; in each case the action is severely restricted, and a rather low-keyed performance—not so much heard as overheard—is generally indicated. They are plays for intimate production, whose effect can easily be dissipated in a full-sized theatre.

More importantly, *Endgame* had the kind of cast that reminded me of the more satisfying London production of *Godot:* a talented, highly professional group of players, who had not yet, however, earned such reputations on the popular stage that they felt obliged to be jealous of their public personalities. There is no denying the brilliance of Bert Lahr's Estragon, but his presence tended to throw the New York *Godot* out of kilter; the Vladimir of that fine actor E. G. Marshall, which should have carried an almost equal weight in the proceedings, was reduced to a rather bland and self-effacing straight-man to Mr. Lahr's top banana. Mr. Beckett's pieces are not designed for star performers, and *Endgame* had a better-matched cast that played together and not in competition with one another. Lester Rawlins, P. J. Kelly, and Nydia Westman—as Hamm, Nagg, and Nell, respectively—turned in expert but unassuming performances. It is a tribute to these three actors that they managed to project the variety and color they did, though two were confined to ashcans and one to a chair throughout the action of the play. Alvin Epstein (Clov) is an excellent mime, but, by electing as he did to speak in a generally toneless voice and to keep his face frozen as though in an expressionless mask, he managed to make the play's only mobile character its most monotonous one. I do not think that either Mr. Epstein or Alan Schneider, the director, were entirely to blame for this; the playwright's stage directions seem to call for pretty much just such an interpretation. I am told that Mr. Epstein's successor in the part, Gerald Hiken, made of Clov a rather more interesting fellow by, if not actually disregarding, at least interpreting very liberally Mr. Beckett's instructions.

Finally, the production gave evidence of the fact that Mr. Schneider has been for a long time a student of Samuel Beckett, that he has personally associated with the author, and that he has seen European productions of his plays in which Mr. Beckett has been himself more immediately involved. He has, I dare say, a clearer idea of the playwright's intentions than any other American director one might think of, and at the Cherry

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Lane he sought only to serve them as faithfully as possible. Under his guidance *Endgame* had a commendable unity of style and tone; there were no tricks, no gimmicks, and nothing added beyond the specifications of the text that seemed in any way an impertinence. (I recall particularly the scraping of Clov's ladder as he dragged it across the floor and the elaboration of his baggage when he was dressed for his departure.) I am sure that, if he could have dropped by, Mr. Beckett would have been well pleased.

As for the play itself, it is by no means as effective and engaging a piece for the theatre as *Waiting for Godot*. More than one friend of mine reported falling asleep during the very short course (about ninety minutes) of the show. They suggested that the obscurity of *Endgame* was to blame, but I do not think that this alone really accounts for their wandering attention. The trouble with the play is that its unquestionable power is that of a pile-driver rather than a goad, oppressive rather than compelling; in other words it lacks that peculiar force we call dramatic, that urges us on from point to point as the story develops and the problem unfolds. For one act, at least, *Waiting for Godot* has—in addition to superior comic values —just this power to stimulate anticipation: at its simplest level, we are encouraged to ask questions—will Godot come and will Estragon and Vladimir continue to wait for him?—and to attend their answers. (The second act is less successful, despite the presence of much fine material; for here Mr. Beckett is obliged to repeat in substance what has already gone before in order to translate the same answers—to the same questions—from the specific and temporal into the general and eternal: the tramps will wait and Godot will fail to keep his appointment, not only today, but, probably, forever.) *Endgame* on the other hand is, as the title suggests, a sort of coda, a concluding cadenza to a work which exists, however, only by implication: Hamm, as he approaches his end, amuses (and tortures) himself for the last moments this side of oblivion by reviewing—wistfully, humorously, bitterly, as the case may be—the specious alternatives to the only responsible attitude a creature of his intelligence and sensibility can take toward the universe into which he is so unfortunate as to have been born. But it is pretty clear soon after the curtain rises that, for all intents and purposes, all the questions have been answered, the decision has been made, and the conflict has already been resolved; the drama, then, is over before the play even begins.

I myself did not succumb to sleep during *Endgame*, but, in large measure I think, my interest was sustained by my familiarity with the script and my curiosity as to how the acts and director would cope with certain particularly prickly passages in it. Without such prior acquaintance with the text, I believe my reaction could easily have been, like my friends', the one that often overcomes me during a public reading of unfamiliar poetry —when I finally decide that it would be more rewarding to read the verse to myself at my own pace and at my own convenience, and I allow myself to go off into as comfortable a state of trance as my chair permits. For *Endgame* is not so much a short play as a very long metaphysical poem; and the staging of it, though it may add color and interest for the initiated,

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does not, seen only once at any rate, disclose essential significances that could not better be discovered by assiduous homework. Its value as a theatre piece, unlike that of *Godot*, is but secondary to its value as a literary and, if you will, philosophical document; and as such it must eventually be assessed.

While it is by no means immediately lucid, *Endgame* is written with remarkable fluency. It is reported that Mr. Beckett finds the translation of his plays from the French a slow and painful process, but the results certainly belie the struggle. If he has found complete ease in his adopted language, he has not yet lost his native voice nor that sense of the music and rhythm of English speech that has come to be attributed to its Irish practitioners. There is no "fine" writing here, but a spare, though very efficient, vocabulary in the service of a kind of easy, even breezy, talk that is very good to listen to. Such dialogue imparts to the characters of *Endgame* a reality all the more striking in view of the strangeness of their situation, though it must be admitted that none of them have the color and dimension of the characters in *Godot*. What is most noticeably lacking is the sense of structure that supports the earlier play: the seemingly idle conversations of Estragon and Vladimir are, first of all, given the theatrical formality of the give-and-take of a vaudeville team; they are, moreover, organized about a central action (waiting), fitted to the symmetrical entrances in each act of Pozzo and Lucky and the boy, and developed so as to culminate in Vladimir's summary speech, beginning, "Was I sleeping, while the others suffered?" *Endgame*, by contrast, is a shapeless affair, following the course of Hamm's apparently spontaneous ruminations, which seem as though they might as well have come in quite another order or ended sooner or later than they do.

Casual and playful as these speculations appear to be, they thinly mask a grim seriousness and profundity that make *Waiting for Godot*, for all its gloomy portent, look rather like *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. *Endgame* is Samuel Beckett's certificate of membership in the company of Existentialists, who cling to some concept of man's worth and dignity while denying the beliefs that have traditionally provided the basis for such value judgments. The simplest expression of Mr. Beckett's position is to be found in the little *Act Without Words* that is bound with the published version of *Endgame*.[1] This "mime for one player" (which I should like to see employed as a vehicle for Alvin Epstein's talents) proposes a man who responds to inviting off-stage whistles only to be thrown back from the wings, and who attempts to grasp various objects that are lowered from the flies only to have them snatched beyond his reach; eventually, frustrated, he comes to ignore these tantalizers and "remains lying on his side, his face towards auditorium, staring before him." The temptations, disregarded, continue. At length, they cease, and "he looks at his hands." The point of view implied seems pretty desperate, but, though his victory may be hollow, the man has won: he has learned to count on nothing but the unvarnished fact of his own existence. If he has not learned to care,

[1] ENDGAME, by *Samuel Beckett*. Grove Press. $1.25.

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he has learned not to care; he has learned to sit still. The position suggests parallels with ascetic orthodoxy, except that for submission to the will of God ("The bastard doesn't exist," cries Hamm) is substituted resigned acceptance of Nothingness.

If *Endgame's* Nell is *nail*, and Nagg, *nagel*, and Clov, *clou*, then Hamm is the hammer of the piece, the active intelligence among passive sentients. Nagg and Nell, his parents, are crumbling away in their ashcans, scarcely sustained by a diet of pap and sugar plums and the memory of old sensual pleasures. Clov, his real or adopted son, is he for whom "the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit," the vegetable man whose awareness does not extend beyond the sensation of the moment; though he serves as Hamm's tormentor, it is clear enough that he has learned his negativism from his master and that he speaks to him in the spirit of a dummy baiting the ventriloquist. In this company, Hamm, for all his ruthlessness, achieves a kind of crumpled dignity; for he alone is able to exercise his will. There is something in him of King Lear, but yet no pity for the wretches of this world, nor faith, nor hope, nor love: he has learned to discard these props and face the void with only a bloodied handkerchief to stanch his wounds. His attitude bespeaks some courage, but there is little in it to cheer us. It is true that a small boy has been spotted in the apparently lifeless world outside Hamm's window and that, at the last, Clov is ready to depart to discover that world for himself (though there is no certainty that he will make it to the door); the comfort we can take from these facts is about as much as is suggested by the two or three pitiful leaves that appear on the bare tree in the second act of *Waiting for Godot*. I doubt that many will want to buy Mr. Beckett's thorny philosophy; but the strength of its presentation is such that it is impossible to dismiss it casually.

All That Fall[2] needs somewhat less attention. This is the radio play that Samuel Beckett wrote between *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, a work commissioned by the Third Programme of the BBC and the first in many years that Mr. Beckett has written originally in English. Reading it to myself, I feel that it is somewhat less than ideally suited to the medium for which it is written; so many of its best effects seem to be visual that it might well make a quite satisfactory short, experimental film. And yet when a concert reading of it was given at the Carnegie Hall Theatre for a single evening last October, its success was such as to warrant a return engagement on a later night. *All That Fall* differs markedly from Mr. Beckett's other plays, and is, for my money, a distinctly inferior work. Its texture of ideas is considerably thinner, and the dialogue, though there are some moments of great incisiveness and others of pungent humor, lacks, on the whole, the author's customary brilliant economy. I do not know how long he worked on *All That Fall*, but I suspect that the pressures of writing to order prevented his using the plane and sanding block as much as he would have liked.

Superficially it is quite a simple, almost a naturalistic play, telling of Mrs. Rooney's trip to the railway station to meet her husband and of their

[2] ALL THAT FALL, by *Samuel Beckett*. Grove Press. $2.50.

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return home together. She is old and fat and ailing; he is old and blind and cantankerous. She is tormented still by grief, remembering their only child, who died long ago; and the themes of children and childlessness run throughout her journey—two of the sound effects being "Death and the Maiden" played on a lonely spinster's gramophone and the braying of unprogenitive hinnies. The train has been delayed, and at the end of the play the information is disclosed that Mr. Rooney has been trying to suppress: a child fell to its death under the wheels. The reader is bound to raise the question of whether or not Mr. Rooney pushed the child from the railway carriage; there is circumstantial evidence to support the view that he did, but I doubt that any amount of studying the text will convince the contrary-minded. It has been suggested that the question is not important, but I believe it is; for the answer determines which of two quite different interpretations of the play is correct. Either Mr. Rooney hides a warm heart beneath his cold exterior, and, sharing his wife's sorrow, would protect her from further reminders of it by trying to keep from her the news of the accident; or else, resenting her longing for children, he recognizes in any child a symbolic and intolerable threat to his own childlike security in her care. The director of the recent concert reading, Ed Greer, and his actors figured Mr. Rooney for a murderer; I think they probably made the correct choice, if for no other reason than that the opposite interpretation would seem unimaginably sentimental for a Beckett play. *All That Fall* is not, as *Endgame* and *Godot* are, obscure; rather it is ambiguous and, I find, irritatingly so—much too like those cryptic stories that crop up now and then in *The New Yorker*. As a philosopher, Mr. Beckett impresses me still; as the psychologist he would be here, he strikes me as just a bit too slick.

Whenever Samuel Beckett is mentioned these days, the name of Eugene Ionesco is likely to be pronounced in the next breath.[3] On the surface there seems to be much to link them together: both are expatriates who have taken France for their home and French for their language; both are writers of plays which are short (M. Ionesco's full-length plays have not yet been imported to America), intimate, and, to say the least, unconventional; and both have been advertised as "egg-head" playwrights in the hope that the public's intellectual snobbery will beguile it into the theatre. But the fact is that, as a playwright, M. Ionesco is scarcely an egg-head at all; and the misleading coupling of their names works to the grave disadvantage of both authors.

During the past year and a half, New York has had quite a heavy dose of M. Ionesco: *The Lesson* was introduced here in the fall of 1956 at what was then called the Tempo Theatre with a stunningly comic interpretation of the Pupil by Julie Bovasso; it was repeated last December at the Carnegie Hall Theatre in a somewhat economical, one-night-stand production

[3] FOUR PLAYS (THE BALD SOPRANO; THE LESSON; JACK, OR THE SUBMISSION; THE CHAIRS), by *Eugene Ionesco*, translated by *Donald M. Allen*. Grove Press. $1.75.

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along with *The Bald Soprano*, and repeated again in a fully mounted version at the Phoenix Theatre with *The Chairs* sharing the bill.[4] At this writing, a production is contemplated at the Sullivan St. Theatre of *Jack* and, again, *The Bald Soprano*. I am hopeful that, after this much exposure to M. Ionesco, our playgoers will learn to disregard the program annotators and critics who fret about his significance; they may then come to take him on the very modest terms on which he deserves to be taken: as a very clever and audacious contriver of theatrical effects.

To say as much is not to deny that M. Ionesco has a point of view or even that that point of view reflects, as his explicators insist, the existentialist posture of the intellectual milieu within which he writes. The ideological framework of his plays is certainly more challenging and more uncompromising than that of the work of, say, Oscar Hammerstein II, or Joshua Logan, or George S. Kaufman, or Messrs. Chodorov and Fields; yet there is probably more reason to associate him with these purveyors of expert, if shallow, theatricalism than with the like of Samuel Beckett. I doubt, for example, that he began to write *The Lesson*, thinking, "I shall now expose the pedantry of professors and the foolishness of seekers after encyclopaedic knowledge." Some such thoughts may have crossed his mind, but what surely engaged him (as it engages us) was the idea of building to a moment of shock and horror from an essentially comic situation. *The Chairs* is less of a disquisition upon the meaninglessness of the universe and the futility of those who think they have the answer to its riddle than a most effective essay in anti-climax. *The Bald Soprano* may purport to be a study of the breakdown of communication in a bourgeois society, but what it primarily conveys is the rather simple-minded comedy of people getting more and more excited as what they say becomes more and more nonsensical. The literary value of these plays is negligible; there is not a line in any of them that is not dispensable, nor a single sentence that carries the weight of meaning of almost any phrase in *Endgame*. M. Ionesco is not a writer, but a play*wright*; his medium is not language, but theatre, a complex of word —one might say, simply, sound—and silence, movement and posture, expression and the absence of expression. His plays live only on the stage or, if on the printed page, then only to those who approach them with a theatrical imagination; to read them after seeing them performed is to see how really insubstantial they are. His formulas are simple enough so that a trained group of actors could conceivably improvise an Ionesco play

[4] In the case of all these productions with the exception of the first two of *The Lesson*, the versions of the British translator, Donald Watson, were used in preference to those of the American, Donald M. Allen. I have been able to compare only the two translations of *The Bald Soprano*, both with each other and with the original, and, if judgement is fair on this basis, it would seem that Mr. Allen is by far the more faithful to the French text. He has taken particular pains to find appropriate aural equivalents for M. Ionesco's nonsense lines. His very occasional errors seem to be the result either of oversight (reading *ne . . . pas* for *ne . . . que*) or of too great literalism (his rendering of *honnête* as "honest" is probably less close to the intent of the original than Mr. Watson's "respectable"). Mr. Watson is capable of making more glaring mistakes and guilty of unjustifiably cutting and impertinently padding; but his English is more relaxed and colloquial and presumably more suitable for stage purposes.

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out of a mere scenario; the essential gimmick is the ironic contradiction of the deed by the attitude of the doer—sense is spoken as nonsense and nonsense, as sense; the ordinary is shocking and the shocking, ordinary; arguments grow from agreements, and disagreements pass unnoticed; comedy leads to murder, and murders are resolved in comedy. M. Ionesco invites parody, and the danger is that, if he progresses no further, he will be reduced to parodying himself.

If he should wish to discourage possible imitators, one direction in which M. Ionesco might move would be toward a greater engagement of his heart, which would involve some sacrifice of the detachment which perhaps he cherishes. For the present, he seems content to be a magician, though indeed a very skillful one, to whom the lady means no more than the saw with which he cuts her in half; both are equally important parts of the trick, and the trick can be duplicated easily enough by another magician—and with another lady. His implied conception of the playwright as impersonal manipulator of effects encourages his audience to respond with a reciprocal disengagement; no play of Brecht's better illustrates than Ionesco's the Brechtian principle of alienation—with its advantages and limitations. The death of the pupil in *The Lesson* is the death of the anonymous lady under the magician's saw—or rather what it would be if she fully acted the death and a blood effect were rigged to the box she lay in; at the most it is as shocking as a murder witnessed from a passing train, but it is not the demise of Juliet or of Desdemona or of anyone we know. M. Ionesco is wise enough to realize that there is a limit to the time one cares to spend with strangers; he might let us get to know his characters better, but he solves the problem rather by keeping his plays short. (I have read his much-touted, three-act *Amédée* and remain unconvinced that he provides enough material, fine as it is, to stretch out for a full evening.)

I have omitted mention till now of *Jack, or the Submission*, for, more than any other of his plays, this one tends beyond mere theatricalism to a fuller sort of theatre. It has its gimmick, too, of course; and a pretty bold one it is, since it is nothing less than the recreation of the sexual act upon the stage. The affect is achieved wholly verbally and quite obliquely: the climax is reached with mounting images of fire and resolved in images of water. It works, too: Roberta II can murmur to Jack, "big flies, cockroaches, sowbugs, toads," and she is as delicious as she is sinister for all that she has nine fingers on one hand and three noses on her face. But the important difference here is that Jack and Roberta II and the members of their families are real and clearly differentiated people. The relationships between them are far more complex than is usual with M. Ionesco's characters; and the seduction scene is no mere theatrical shocker, but an action conditioned by those relationships and conditioning them in return. The language of the play is gibberish, but its meaning is full: Jack the nonconformist (he doesn't like hashed brown potatoes) is subdued by love; he is the victim in the very moment of his victory. What is more, we are actually made to care a little.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music Chronicle

COMING TO THE FINAL SEQUENCE in the excellent *Omnibus* talk in which he described what the music in an opera does with the drama, Leonard Bernstein found the real meaning of the 'grand' in grand opera to be the way the music magnifies and crystallizes emotion—to the point, he added, of making words almost unnecessary. Opera reaches its highest estate, he said, when the music is so communicative that the merest general knowledge of the dramatic action provides us with the key to rich apprehension. Citing as an example the end of *Tristan und Isolde*, he pointed out that we don't have to understand every word Isolde sings to feel her exaltation—don't have to know that she is saying

Soll ich schlürfen, untertauchen,
Süss in Duften mich verhauchen . . .

We have to know, said Bernstein, that—Tristan having died in her arms—Isolde stands over his body, ecstatic, mystically united with him, transfigured through love. And that is all we have to know for Wagner's music to do what every great work of art does—namely to create a special world of its own, into which we enter, and from which we emerge enriched and ennobled.

It was good to have this stated, and stated so well to so many people; and it would have been good for Bernstein to develop its implications. For one thing, if we don't need to understand every word in an opera, then we don't need to have it sung in English. And if it is the music in an opera that causes the drama to take place in the enriching and ennobling special world of the work of art, then it is the music that makes an opera valuable, worth performing and worth listening to, or makes it none of these. Good music translates even dramatic absurdity into a *Trovatore*, a *Rigoletto*, an *Aida;* poor music cannot make anything of a good drama but a poor opera.

I stress the paramountcy of the music because the tendency—of the American composer, the American public and most American critics—has been to make the drama paramount, so that an interesting dramatic idea has won acceptance for music of little or no intrinsic value or dramatic force. The most spectacular successes in recent years have been won by the works that Menotti has insisted are not operas but musical dramas—much of whose music is of a trashily melodious kind that pleases the unsophisticated ear, but whose dramatic claptrap, in addition, so powerfully engages the audience's interest and emotions as to mislead it into wrongly ascribing the powerful effect to the music. *The Medium* had this success again when it was revived with *The Old Maid and the Thief* in the New York City Opera's spring exhibition (with the help of $105,000 from the

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Ford Foundation) of what has been achieved in opera in this country. For my part, observing the two works again after a number of years, I found that I either had forgotten, or now appreciated more keenly than before, how bad they were—*The Old Maid* with its comic cutenesses, *The Medium* with the rubbishy business of the mute boy and the games of make believe that he and the girl play when they are alone, the mellifluous third-rate tunefulness of the music of these scenes and of Mrs. Gobineau's aria, the standardized "dramatic" writing in Madame Flora's "big scenes."

In addition to the Menotti operas the works which the New York City Company's "Panorama of Opera, U. S. A." offered as "living theater . . . created for today's audiences by today's writers" included two that actually had been written for, and produced in, the Broadway theater—Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*, with book adapted by him from Lillian Hellman's play *The Little Foxes*, and Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars*, with book by Maxwell Anderson derived from Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*. These two I will comment on later; first I wish to speak of the others—the operas: Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*; Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, with book by John Latouche; Vittorio Giannini's *The Taming of the Shrew*, with book by Mr. Giannini and Dorothy Fee; Marc Bucci's *Tale for a Deaf Ear*; Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*; and Robert Kurka's *The Good Soldier Schweik*, with book by Lewis Allan. Of these the first had been performed by the company in 1956 and had won the New York Music Critics' Circle Award; the last was being performed for the first time anywhere; and the others, first produced elsewhere, were now given their first New York performances. In their various ways all of them captured and held attention with what happened on the stage, and carried this with music which in no instance had the impress of an original creative mind, but instead was an employment of existing resources for the needs of the text, done with more expertness or less, and in two instances with humorous cleverness. The folksong idiom of much of *Baby Doe* was not expressively adequate to the requirements of a text which at times exhibited subtle psychological insight and literary distinction; and it was used by Moore with singular feebleness. Bucci handled more sophisticated idioms with expertness; Giannini carried his expertness in producing a facsimile of the operatic-comedy style of Verdi's *Falstaff* to the point where it first made one laugh, then became irritating; Kurka devised an appropriate crude banality for the misadventures of the simple-minded Schweik. As for Bernstein, the major talent of the group, he again compensated for his lack of originality by the impressive resourcefulness in ideas and technique that made his serious music for the play about a disenchanted suburban couple highly accomplished. But he also demonstrated again that his gifts operate most successfully for comedy: the gift for mimicry and parody that he had applied with such brilliant results to the styles of Italian opera in the song "Glitter and Be Gay" in *Candide*, operated now in *Trouble in Tahiti* in the service of a sense for effective theater, which placed on the omnipresent television screen of today a dance-band trio of a girl and two boys who periodically crooned into the mike in three-part harmony their

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background comment on the mornin' sun that kissed the windows, kissed the walls, of the liddle white house, the liddle white house in Scarsdale, kissed the driveway, kissed the lawn, kissed the newspaper at the front door, of the liddle white house in Highland Park . . . the liddle white house in Shaker Heights . . .

Turning now to *Regina* and *Lost in the Stars*—it was in connection with the original production of *Regina* that Bernstein first stated the idea he developed in his *Omnibus* talk on musical comedy a year or two ago: that with its increasing use of the technical devices of opera—the use, for example, of the device of double soliloquy in *South Pacific*—the American musical comedy was becoming the American opera. This left out of account what seems to me the decisive factor in the matter—namely, the expressive connotation of the musical substance to which the technical devices are applied: if the musical setting of the text employs the language of serious music, the resulting expressive communication is that of opera; if it employs the language of musical comedy, the resulting expressive communication is that of musical comedy. And this is true no matter how many technical devices of opera are introduced: when the device of double soliloquy is used with substance in the language of serious music in the second-act duet of Sophie and Octavian right after the presentation of the rose in *Der Rosenkavalier*, the result is opera; when this device is used with substance in the language of musical comedy in *South Pacific*, the result is musical comedy. Nor does the musical comedy become opera when its language is used in the setting of a serious play, as in *Lost in the Stars*: the result is, rather, musical falsification of the play. *Lost in the Stars*, said the review in *Newsweek*, "offered further evidence that the boundary lines which were formerly drawn between musical comedy, musical theater and opera seem to be fast disappearing." They may be disappearing for the *Newsweek* reviewer and the director of the New York City Opera; but nothing could be more striking than the repeated change from the expressive level of the spoken portions of *Lost in the Stars* to that of the musical-comedy idiom—melodic, rhythmic, orchestral—of most of the occasional songs, the most blatant instance being provided in the final scene by the digging song of the little Negro boy, a cute little-Negro-boy specialty number straight out of Broadway, immediately after the harrowing courtroom scene that is the climax of a serious play about Negroes in South Africa.

This sort of thing happens in *Regina* too; but the first thing to speak of is the play which Blitzstein fashioned out of *The Little Foxes*, and which a friend told me represented a coarsening of the original. I suspect I would have found even the Hellman play implausible; but the speeches and actions in Blitzstein's melodramatic caricature that were intended to freeze my blood made me laugh. And dramatic plausibility was lessened further by much of the music. Not having seen the original play I can only surmise that in the final scene Regina's financial demands backed by threats of exposure caused her brother to waggle a finger at her with mock reproachfulness and call her a greedy girl; and if my surmise is

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correct this moment of grim humor left the continuity and tension of the scene unbroken. But in *Regina* it becomes "Greedy Girl," a humorous musical-comedy song and an interpolation long enough to break the continuity and tension of the scene and create a musical-comedy context in which the melodrama becomes unreal and absurd. The same thing happens again a few minutes later when the brother sings another such song about his acceptance of what he can't help; and in the earlier scenes of *Regina* such incongruities are created by some of the serious arias which also have the melodies and lyrics, and therefore the expressive connotations, of musical comedy. Actually, then, much of *Regina* is an American musical; and there is nothing wrong in writing an American musical, but there is something wrong, it seems to me, in writing it as a setting of the melodrama Blitzstein made of *The Little Foxes*. These musical comedy portions of *Regina* testify to his gift for the genre; the other portions demonstrate that his gift is almost exclusively for that genre. He is able to whip up a frenzy for Regina; but for the expressive requirements of the other characters and dramatic situations he reveals an inadequacy of musical imagination and invention that merely reaches its extreme in the occasional abandonment of music and resort to speech. In *Regina*, then, Blitzstein uses his gift for musical comedy to cover his lack of the gifts required for a musical setting of *The Little Foxes*.

What I have written amounts to saying that the New York City Opera's director exercised poor judgment in his selection of what to include in the "Panorama of Opera, U.S.A." But the judgment was even worse than has appeared thus far. In the dozen or more years of its operation the company had itself produced one American work, Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land*, whose music gave it distinction; and in the many years of American opera elsewhere than in the City Center two other works had had music at once distinguished and dramatically effective—Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *The Mother Of Us All*. But these the New York City Opera did not include in its exhibition of American achievement in opera.

The one valuable thing the company did with the Ford Foundation's money was to give a number of artists opportunities for work. And I report impressive achievements by Beverly Sills, Ruth Kobart, Patricia Neway, Brenda Lewis, Claramae Turner, Walter Cassel, Norman Kelley, Lawrence Winters and David Atkinson among the singers; good conducting by Arnold Gamson and Seymour Lipkin among others; excellent stage designing by Paul Sylbert, Andreas Nomikos, Donald Oenslager and Howard Bay; effective staging by Michael Pollock, Jose Quintero, Carmen Capalbo and Margaret Webster.

The American Opera Society ended its season with Monteverdi's *Coronation of Poppea*, which it had performed once before. Listening to Arnold U. Gamson's realization of the music from the voice parts and bass line of the original manuscript, I was this time more aware of harmonic progressions which probably were not used by Monteverdi and

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therefore should not be introduced into his music today. In addition, the practice of having the singers partially act their parts in a concert performance was carried further this time, producing absurdities like the two men in tails seated on a ramp asleep and holding spears, or Leontyne Price and Robert Rounseville acting some of the passion they sang about but not embracing, or a couple of other singers acting coy in an adolescent flirtation. And whereas in a concert performance one would have been aware only of Leontyne Price's beautiful singing of Poppea's music, in this semi-acted performance one noted that it emphasized the fact that the woman whom Nero was crowning his empress in place of Octavia was a Negress. Having mentioned the things that distracted my attention and interfered with my enjoyment of the music and performance, let me say how beautiful and expressive the music was; how well it was sung by others besides Miss Price—Mariquita Moll, Sarah Fleming, Mr. Rounseville, Ezio Flagello (who charmed the ear with an especially beautiful bass-baritone voice) and in fact the entire cast except the rough-voiced Donald Gramm; and how well Mr. Gamson integrated the singing with the orchestral context.

Finally a word about a concert in New York's YM-YWHA, at which the unfamiliar and remarkable *Missa "Mi-mi"* of Ockeghem and other fine pieces of early vocal polyphony were sung with wonderfully pure and transparent tone and sensitive phrasing by the teen-agers of the Renaissance Chorus under the direction of Harold Brown.

A COMMUNICATION

Dear Sirs:

We are preparing for publication two volumes of translations of the plays of Bertolt Brecht. May I through your columns ask anyone who has translated any of his plays, or excerpts or songs from plays, to communicate with me, sending if possible a short example of his work?

Yours faithfully,

John Cullen

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Reviews

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Fiction Chronicle[1]

THIS IS ALWAYS an impossible job. The fictional output of any given three months is too various to be described item by item; it is too limited to base a good swinging generalization on. But I will try one anyhow; it is that the American novelist, like the novelist from the outskirts of the Empire, still tries to use his imagination, while the British novelist has allowed this organ to atrophy, stultify, and generally go to hell.

The novel of the quarter (to get to the best news first) is *The Cross of Baron Samedi* by Richard Dohrman. It is the first book one would advise people interested in contemporary fiction to buy, to read, to store up in anticipation of a memorable literary career. Mr. Dohrman, though he has much to learn about writing, is a born novelist. He uses language with a broad, fluid sweep and with a continual undertone of emotional agitation that make his book a vivid pleasure to read. Perhaps his fondness for the knotty, elliptical, elaborate sentence needs some chastening. When he set out to be *very* fine, there was one reader at least who sometimes didn't have the foggiest idea of what he was getting at. But the novel as a novel has pace and splendor and emotion. It is, briefly, a study in guilt, resistance, and degeneration. The scene is Haiti during the American occupation of the 1920's; the protagonist is a young marine lieutenant from Bennington, Vermont. Mr. Dohrman plants his reader in the depths of the situation and works his way out through the classic techniques of analytic exposition. As the story moves slowly forward and downward, the resolving mind of the protagonist moves backward and upward. When everything is ripe, there is an explosion. We are given to understand all the reasons for the explosion just in time for it to take place.

Inevitably, as the reader sees more and more fully the history of Owen Wiley and his wife Isabel, as he sees her dreadful, decent family more in the round, the fabulous darkness of the early chapters fades into something not far from the common light of day. But the affair with Adele

[1] THE CROSS OF BARON SAMEDI, by *Richard Dohrman.* Houghton Mifflin. $4.50. THE SUN DIAL, by *Shirley Jackson.* Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $3.75. THE RETURN OF ANSEL GIBBS, by *Frederick Buechner.* Knopf. $3.75. PARKTILDEN VILLAGE, by *George P. Elliott.* Beacon Press. $3.50. THE MACKEREL PLAZA, by *Peter De Vries.* Little, Brown. $3.75. THE PRICE OF DIAMONDS, by *Dan Jacobson.* Knopf. $1.45. THE HIRELING, by *L. P. Hartley.* Rinehart. $3.50. THE CONTENDERS, by *John Wain.* St. Martin's Press. $3.95. HAPPY AS LARRY, by *Thomas Hinde.* Criterion. $3.95. THE SUBTERRANEANS, by *Jack Kerouac.* Grove Press. $1.45.

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and the sudden deterioration of Owen in the back country are brilliantly managed; and while there are moments when the detail becomes static, there are also moments of such overwhelming and harrowing intensity as to be completely irresistible. Perhaps the finest thing about the novel is something which I can only describe as Mr. Dohrman's orchestral control of the overtones of clean and dirty. There is nothing smudgy about the novel (no particular horror about filth, cruelty, lust, or squalid ignorance, either); but one gains an almost religious sense of what it means to live honorably among slovens and then to lose one's honor and all the reasons for it; and this is, I think, an even greater achievement of literary imagination than either Mr. Dohrman's setting or his society. It is a book which reaches beyond pathos and anxiety and comes very close to the roots of pity and terror. Beyond much question, it marks the arrival of a major literary talent; and the appropriate incantations are very much in order.

After this, we move down a couple of pegs. *The Sun Dial*, by Shirley Jackson, is a cool, competent exercise in the macabre, predicated on the approaching end of the world. Well, it is nonsense; you might just as well write a novel called *Love Among the Centaurs* for the changes to be rung on ordinary bedroom-scenes. But Miss Jackson has controlled her situation by putting a high-lustre finish on the characters who are to undergo Armageddon and emerge (without in the slightest degree meriting to do so) in a new world on the other side. Chilly and polished, quite selfish and imperturbable, the Halloran family represents a collection of preoccupations which are clearly going to be in the highest degree irrelevant to the Regenerate Life. The effects are funny and sad and frightening; and if one never quite forgets that it's a game, at least the game is played with mirrors which provide a really devastating tangle of reflections. For instance, an immoral young man named Essex is being teased to tell about the scandalous misdeeds of his youth:

> "The statistics scratch at your eyes," Essex said. "When I was twenty, and could not see time at all, the chances of my dying of heart disease were one in a hundred and twelve. When I was twenty-five and deluded for the first time by a misguided passion, the chances of my dying of cancer were one in seventy-eight. When I was thirty, and the days and hours began to close in, the chances of my dying in an accident were one in fifty-three. Now I am thirty-two years old, and the path getting narrower all the time, and the chances of my dying of anything at all are one in one."
>
> "Very profound," said Mrs. Halloran, "but still not altogether scandalous."

This, I think, is brilliant prose; and there are touches of this compressed and withering wit throughout the novel. In addition, the story is furnished with a fine, tantalizing set of Elizabethan parallels, for the bewilderment of the solemn reader. Why is Mrs. Halloran's first name Orianna, and

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that of the young man who "rearranges her library" Essex? The point could well be private to Miss Jackson; at any rate, it provides a relatively slight distraction from the polished, macabre surfaces of this evil little entertainment. Miss Jackson writes (as usual, when she is not in her domestic-comedy vein) like an angel with power steering and ball-joint front suspension.

Another competent small novel with a rather special *donnée* is *The Return of Ansel Gibbs* by Frederick Buechner. Like all Mr. Buechner's characters, those who surround Ansel Gibbs take themselves with a hushed and reverent solemnity which is apt to stir the very depths of one's impatience. Acolytes of the risen Ego, they cluster this time around an Important Cabinet Officer, who is a little, but only a little, less wooden than the public image of such people seems usually to be (Mr. Charley Wilson was a striking and glorious exception). Mr. Buechner's novel has to do with telling the truth in public; it is a study in the conflicting areas of the expedient and the honorable, with reverberations which spread—for a contemporary novel, inevitably—into the area of personal identity. The stage of public affairs is, as I have suggested, a rather resonant platform on which to work out these issues; and Mr. Beuchner's awe in the face of official business is clearly excessive (an interview with the President is pictured in terms appropriate only to the Annunciation). But at its core the book treats exhilaratingly of guilt, responsibility, and lonely *versus* pseudo-folksy Americans. The ingénue and her young television star are reassuringly irreverent; the testing of Ansel Gibbs is not sheltered from any of the major facts of life, it is cruel, illogical, and ruthless, as these things often are; and altogether, Mr. Buechner has written a grave and beautiful book. His prose is not jewelled, it is carefully and finely formed; his moral judgments are meticulous, intelligent, and sustained; his compassion untouched with sentimentality. All in all, *The Return of Ansel Gibbs* is a fine experience and a hopeful omen for Mr. Buechner's future.

The novel of moral insight always has a delayed and, as it were, subsurface impact. *Parktilden Village* by George P. Elliott is such a book, slight and spare in appearance, deliberately quiet in its manner, but armored with a number of depth charges. It is a study in the moral weakness of a nice, indecisive young academic who smashes four lives with one lie and is then left alone with his guilt. This story could be told with banners and display; Mr. Elliott gets more mileage from the theme by treating it with an integrity which grows ever quieter as it becomes deeper and more desolate. The scene is a housing development in Berkeley, California; in the background are those volunteer desperadoes and mythical pseudo-outlaws, the hot-rod and motorcycle gangs; and the decisive failure of the central character is a kind of flabbiness and lack of definition which is so terribly abject as almost literally not to be "his fault." The novel's best moments are moments of situation, not of character; for this taste, at any rate, Mr. Elliott has left his central figures almost alarmingly undefined, not only visually but verbally. He writes

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a flat, unvibrant style, adorned with occasional crusts and sprinkles of his own wit; and the characters have no flair for saying things out of their own natures. They all talk double-distilled Elliott. But the real reward for the reader of *Parktilden Village* is independent of all adornments. It is an ultimate imagination of moral understanding and compassion which has the depth and lucidity of a nightmare and a gravity surpassing the very idea of the "serious."

Finally, two funny novels. *The Mackerel Plaza* by Peter De Vries starts off as a Catherine's wheel of verbal fireworks—swift, silly, and seductive. What is young Mackerel doing as a split-level, transplastic, ranch-type preacher in Westport, Connecticut? How is he going to keep Miss Molly Calico out of the damp Jungian hands of the church-analyst and the dark Roumanian Jaguar of TV-director Todarescu? As long as he limits himself to fighting off the religious revival, repressing efforts to canonize his late wife, and trying desperately to acquire a new one, Mackerel is, in a ghastly way, funny. The humor of the book is that of a man caught in the middle of an extended public occasion; and Mr. De Vries, who is, over the shorter distances, one of the most animated fellows around, gets the whole caper off to a fine start. But he reaches after too much. When young Mackerel starts explaining himself, the book starts bogging down; when his deceased wife's sister becomes predatory, and he starts responding to her raids, the story ceases to be worth the explanation it requires, and so *The Mackerel Plaza* loses much of the fresh, fantastic energy with which it began.

Mr. Dan Jacobson's *The Prince of Diamonds* is a novel of South-African subtlety. Its heroes, Fink and Gottlieb, are a pair of Jewish folk-heroes born from the mythology of the *schnorrer* and formed in the fiery furnace of the vaudeville stage. Fink is thin and Gottlieb fat, and their unvarying search for argumentative advantage does not promise much in the way of variety; but Mr. Jacobson can find pathos as well as a broad streak of humor in the situation of two concealed antagonists who are both busy hiding from one another the fact that they possess the same weapon. Perhaps in the end his novel does not amount to much more than an extended variation on the old joke about "You tell me you're going to Minsk so I'll think you're going to Pinsk, but I happen to know you really *are* going to Minsk, so why do you lie to me?"—but it's a good joke, and, as they say, he tells it well.

There is obviously the greatest possible variety in these several novels, and I have no intention of dropping them permanently in any one basket, but a single quality that they have in common, even the most restrained of them, is imaginative exuberance. They are concerned to make new patterns with words and feelings; the least ambitious of them has a touch of freshness, a little excitement about it, as of a man who really wants to say, "Look here, you, I've seen something." Morals, manners, landscapes, or plain verbal patter—whatever it is that excites them, the reader is made to perceive it, and that there are differences between this thing and something else. The lines are sharp, the eye or ear of the

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novelist is lively, his sense of particularity is relatively unsmudged; and, for all their vast differences of degree and of kind, each of the books has a certain sort of resonance.

The novel from the home counties which comes closest to matching them is, I am afraid, L. P. Hartley's *The Hireling*. It is a competent, corny, insincere piece of hokum on the theme of true love frustrated by the artificial barriers of class prejudice. Mr. Hartley has a character, Leadbitter the public chauffeur, in whom one discerns the rudiments of literary energy. What is good about him is that he is tough, really tough, tough all the way through, so that he doesn't have to think about his toughness. But to make him fall in love with one of his customers is to throw away everything for which the first vision of his character has worked; it reduces him to a simple bleeding-heart, and then, with awful inevitability, follows melodrama, from the blood-and-thunder abysses of the Victorian stage. The problem is not, by any means, that Mr. Hartley is an unaccomplished novelist; his style is crisp, fluid, and energetic, his grasp of character is clear and strong. But he does not want to write a real novel. One has the feeling, somehow, that in this book he laid out his raw materials, and saw that they would make something rare and difficult and exciting; but he yawned, and said, "Oh, well," and built a little doghouse instead.

For reasons of simple economy, I shall not try to review three other British novels which turned up in the quarter's fiction. Mr. Kingsley Amis has been very adequately lambasted elsewhere for having written *I Like It Here*. This was simply a wretched, routine mistake, and the less said about it the better. But Mr. John Wain, of the same turtleneck-sweater school of fiction, has performed something just about as bad in writing *The Contenders*. One of Mr. Wain's shrewder gambits was to have his novel narrated by a third-rate provincial journalist, so that, however abject the prose, at least it is always in character. It succeeds in mingling the cute, the mechanical and the ordinary quite indescribably. Finally, Mr. Thomas Hinde has written a grubby little novel about London bohemians, called *Happy as Larry*. This has more bounce than the other two; its central figures are a psychopathic nonsculptor-nonwriter and his kleptomaniac girlfriend, who are out to blackmail, or protect from blackmail, a nice homosexual they know. All this confusion breeds here and there a funny moment; but essentially the author is out to exploit his materials in the same coldblooded way as Wain, Amis, and, for that matter, Hartley. Behind all these performances, one senses a pervasive interest in something as deadly as just getting another book written.

Of course, national boundaries are only dimly related to this sort of thing; the hack-writer is always with us, everywhere. Yet I think I sense a kind of turning-back, on the part of English novelists, from the exercise of the imagination; not on the part of the senior novelists only, but in those very groups, bohemian or pseudo-bohemian, which seem to be most vociferous in their protests against the grimy, sodden reality of

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daily life. A couple of the writers noted above are of the set vulgarly known as Angry Young Men. (Delicious discussions evidently flourish as to the reality of this grouping; but as the designation was apparently invented by the people themselves, it may stand for the moment.) The American equivalents of AYM are no doubt the much-stigmatized and tsk-tsk'ed San Francisco crowd. But the differences are very great indeed; and so far as I can see, they are all in favor of the West-Coast thunderbirds.

This is not to claim that Mr. Allen Ginsberg is the bardiest bard since Orpheus, or that Mr. Jack Kerouac is in line for the laurel-wreath of Cervantes. The sort of protest that these writers voice is liable, as some of them at least are aware, to its own sort of silliness. Indeed, hipsters are so vulnerable to parody, there's not really much fun in parodying them (their reaction is itself a parody, and why parody *that?*). Besides, tut-tutting young men who are out to *épater* the bourgeois has the unfortunate effect of implying that one is oneself limited by bourgeois values. About the San Francisco scallions, one can note approvingly that at least they are not ashamed to grow big and green and smelly: and it is never safe to blame an artist for choosing to be a scallion instead of a petunia. In setting out to gut the American bourgeois, the San Franciscans have not blinkered out of their vision everything but the bourgeoisie. Kerouac particularly is a man of high comic talent; he has a gift for grotesque free-wheeling which merits a good deal of what I can only call gratitude, and his wild, Faustian appetite for seeing every possible aspect of every situation sometimes builds to peaks of genuine intensity. He is in an old American tradition of living and writing big; and about this sort of thing, it's always premature (as well as insufferably smug) to say, "Nothing will ever come of it."

A moderate, momentary suspension of the Ben Franklin, *Saturday Review* literary values, for example, will enable one to see many moments of delirious humor and fine imaginative perception in *On The Road*. Few Americans have written as well as Kerouac about the experience of jazz, avoiding the whim-wham picturesequeness of those colored boys just letting themselves go, and probing into the nervous, aware solitude of free improvisation. Very few writers since Dostoyevsky have attempted such a mixture of buffoonery and painful sincerity as the moment when Dean Moriarty and Carlo Marx sit down crosslegged on a bed and try to talk out everything that is in their minds. Few novelists have faced up so frankly to the task of recording those multiple decisions and revisions, those grotesque, poignant transvaluations of self which flash constantly behind the neurotic's public mask.

A rather special quality of the AYM novels noted above is their recurrent attitude toward anything arty, or, for that matter, anything artistic. They are truculent, downright, no-nonsense-about-it; writing's a trade like any other, only a little easier, a little more independent than most—more like a racket, in fact. Anything highbrow is probably phony. The writer is much preoccupied with keeping up to date his canned lecture

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on Graham Greene, and wishes he'd canned one on a dead novelist, so he wouldn't have to revise it. He is concerned with getting himself a snug spot on a BBC panel, or doing a program for the telly; he thinks constantly of reviewers, advances, assignments, chores, and the crummy little details of a literary career. There is satire here, but there is also self-congratulation. At least we are honest, this is what the literary (artistic) life really is like.

The West-Coast JD's are, thank God, a cut above this. Their protest has in it the indispensable ingredient of generous, not to say sincere, imagination; it involves their whole, unarmored beings, and it aspires to be something more than a cute, tired game played with smudgy counters. This is not to say that everything the hipsters write has to be read as a personal document. Leo Percepied, the narrator of *The Subterraneans*, is a thoroughly dramatic figure; his very name and his omnipresent mother suggest an ancestral prototype. Thus we gain a bit of useful distance. What is still more impressive, in this book Kerouac seems to be developing an art in handling that self-consciousness which afflicted too embarrassingly the narrator and sometimes the characters of *On The Road*. Here self-consciousness becomes dramatic, and I think generalized; it is sterilized by its painful, therapeutic character. It also becomes deliberately funny, for Leo can see and parody his many different selves, revealing now the big gleeful hood, now the fearful, superstitious boy, now the greatbrain writer, now the selfish calculator, the buffoon, the miserable egotist. The story Leo has to tell is ridiculously plain. He simply describes, from beginning to end, his affair with the Negro girl Mardou Fox. But the texture of his story is so thick with his feelings about her and hers about him, with his about hers and hers about his, and both of theirs about the feelings they ought to have but don't, as well as about the feelings they shouldn't have but do—that one couldn't wish poor Leo fewer than a dozen tongues and voices to tell his story properly. He compromises, moderately indeed, for a rambling, polyphonic, octopus-armed prose style, which stumbles continually on the edge of syntactical breakdown, but holds together surprisingly well in long lyrical paragraphs. And what this style enables Leo to do is to descend into the corrupt and incoherent abyss of his own ego, to sink deeper and deeper into an almost hallucinatory honesty about his own dishonesty and an exposure of his own weakness and inconsistency. Kerouac has not really written a story about hipsters or Negro girls or subterraneans; it is about people, who are seen with imagination, sensitivity, and compassion, and its effect is both genuine and powerful. A novel it is not. Structurally, it is not much more than a sketch, and, as one might expect, it is an uneven sketch. Yet it has many brilliant moments, patches of bold and exciting writing which will commend it to every reader who cares about his vocation. I don't think one can dismiss it to the outer void unless one dismisses along with it *Notes from Underground*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and the very memory of the *poètes maudits*.

There's no point in making this an all-out defence. It's obvious enough

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that Allen Ginsberg is no Rimbaud and Kerouac is no Dostoyevsky. But this is exactly why they must not be criticized in terms that hit at Rimbaud and Dostoyevsky—"ugh, Ginsberg uses dirty words and makes illogical connections, Kerouac writes about nothing but neurotics and slobs." When we stop making these tribal outcries, as before a strange and fearful magic, we may be in a position to discriminate—to see that, on the evidence of "Howl" and "Siesta in Xbalba," Allen Ginsberg is probably the least talented young man in that enchanted city by the Golden Gate, but that in Kerouac, as in Saul Bellow, we have a rare and precious commodity, an artist in the gay yet anguished grotesque. If we are to have protesters at all (I assume, perhaps rashly, that North America is still a little short of Absolute Literary Perfection), it is certainly better to have them witty and inventive than sullen and dull.

Notes on Contributors *(cont.)*

EARLE ERNST, Professor of Drama and Theatre at the University of Hawaii, is the author of *The Kabuki Theatre* (Oxford University Press).

B. H. HAGGIN'S recently completed book, *Conversations with Toscanini*, is to be published early in 1959 by Doubleday.

ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS reports: "My book on Open Form, somewhat recast, and retitled *Strains of Discord*, will be out in the fall under a Cornell University Press imprint."

HERBERT GOLD has been traveling in Europe and is at work on a new novel.

MARVIN MUDRICK was recently awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship. His project is a study of the fiction of Colette.

WILLIAM MEREDITH, whose recent book of poems is called *The Open Sea*, describes himself as "an amateur, in the worst as well as the best sense, of Japanese culture."

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HERBERT GOLD

Some Davids in Role of Solomon

PARTICULARLY FRENCH WRITERS are addicted to self-analysis, both of their selves as private human beings and of themselves as writers. This doubly admirable habit was crowned recently by that Swedish committee which gave the novelist Albert Camus (who has written novellas, fables, and passionate essays, but has yet to write a novel) the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Cowboys on the lone prairie are we, however; Americans blush more. It is difficult to get an American to talk about his soul unless he be Thomas Wolfe or Johnny Mathis. Perhaps in adolescence we have become super-saturated with cunning, libidinous soul-talk; too many girls have tried to keep their eyes from crossing by asking us, "Are You Happy?" At any rate, the American tends to write his novels, plays, or whatever, searching both disguise and objectification, and leaves personal confession about craft and self to occasional and irregular moments of love, friendship, and fliptop wisecrack.

Therefore the notion which possessed the editors of the *Paris Review* not only serves to pick up some names for the magazine; the conversations in *Writers at Work*[1] also seem to have served the interviewees in giving them a social sanction for unbuttoning themselves with at least partial seriousness. In addition, they serve the reader in giving him glancing insights at the ways of work, manners, ambitions, and personalities of some writers ranging in importance from the established and distinguished (E. M. Forster, Joyce Cary, William Faulkner, François Mauriac) to the cute and faddish (Truman Capote, Françoise Sagan). Dorothy Parker, James Thurber, Thornton Wilder, Georges Simenon, Frank O'Connor, Robert Penn Warren, Alberto Moravia, Nelson Algren, Angus Wilson, and William Styron are the other writers who gave their energies to the enterprise. Their contributions vary from serious discussions of craft and intention to Dorothy Parker's sad, boozy recollections of American literary chic. For some reason—perhaps discretion—the most dramatically moving interview of the *Paris Review* series, that with Ralph Ellison, was omitted from this compilation. It was one which revealed very painfully the doubts and discouragements of a man who, although author of an extraordinary novel, still felt himself incomplete and inadequate in relation to critics and other writers.

In a few of these conversations the writers exhibit the retreated, pampered dimness of a child being told that he is ill; but in most of them the interviewers have managed to elicit vivid recollections, comments, and occasionally gibes. François Mauriac notes that his own youthful ambitions assured him of the reality of the Madame Bovarys, the Anna Kareninas,

[1] WRITERS AT WORK: The Paris Review Interviews (with an introduction by *Malcolm Cowley*). Viking. $5.00.

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the characters from Balzac: to read a novel is autobiographical, too. Thornton Wilder apologizes for the element of preaching left in his work: "I suspect that all writers have some didactic intention. That starts the motor. Or let us say: many of the things we eat are cooked over a gas stove, but there is no taste of gas in the food." Faulkner speaks of ruthlessness, and gets much closer to his private furnace than does the enduring flimflam of his public utterance: "If a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the 'Ode On a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of old ladies." Simenon speaks movingly of economy and of the personal tension which insures the brevity of his novels: "You know, you have a beautiful sentence —cut it." And: "After eleven days I can't—it's impossible. I have to— It's physical. I am too tired." Robert Penn Warren explains why he does not have a 'plan.' "You can't predict it—just dredge for it and hope you have something worth the dredging. (But) know what is relevant. You *don't choose a story, it chooses you.*"

Warren has caught one of the striking repetitions in this book—the novelist's conviction that he doesn't know what he is saying until he says it. He does not work from outline; he tries, in the act of writing, to find his issues. He thinks he is looking for the Indies; he may finish by merely discovering America; he is sure only of his seamanship—and may find himself seasick or becalmed along the way. The critics who tell him where he must go are Isabellas who don't even risk their jewelry.

The experimental, empirical character of the novel suits the classical American mind and perhaps explains why, as a matter of fact, there continue to be excellent novels written in America, despite the failure of established criticism to welcome them and the failure of audiences to support them economically. This suggests a paradox: the novel is a form which suits the temperament of the American writer at the same moment as its complexity, risk-taking, and total demand for attention fail to engage the American reader, who sometimes seems to be a loose piece of string that can be neither pulled nor pushed—just floating on the rapids of history, never able to become a worm by spontaneous generation because the passage is too fast and anyhow worms aren't made that way nowadays.

It would be sad indeed if a crevasse continued to widen between writer and reader. For one thing, ignoring for the moment the grandiose historical meanings of this separation, of a vital art from its audience, the novelist feels an unusual sense of responsibility toward his readers. A story must be shared or it becomes a bleak fantasy. Faced by this danger, a responsible harkening to an audience may degenerate to the slavish flattery which is the rule of the mass media. This misplaced sense of responsibility gives perhaps the most generous explanation of the phenomenon of specialization among novelists—the specialists in celebration of America (Herman Wouk, Sloan Wilson, et al.), the specialists in bitchiness and cuteness (Mary McCarthy, Truman Capote), the specialists in specialization (James Gould Cozzens). These loose enterprises lead straight to Luce Enterprises. Perhaps the phenomenal thing is not that so many novelists follow criticism and the public; it is that so many, among them some of the

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writers represented in this book, cling to their most genial ambitions, saying as much as they can, defiantly and sometimes even courageously. They have found their moral equivalent of war in the ancient joy of story-telling. The warfare comes of their effort to interest their readers away from the many species of suicide now offered.

A writer is a piece of string which frazzles quickly; also you can draw him along, but you cannot very successfully push him. The *Paris Review* amateurs apparently showed the kind of intelligent deference which drew their subjects into sometimes forbidding territory, as when Nelson Algren answered a question about his friendship with Simone de Beauvoir: "I showed her the electric chair," or confessed about his novel *A Walk on the Wild Side:* "It's a contrived book . . . . could be written anywhere there's a typewriter."

In many of the interviews, the questions are more complex and the answers more tentative, but neither writer nor interviewer in most cases has been afraid to confront the issues. Since we live outside the French tradition of publishing confessional letters and journals, this will probably be the closest view we can have to most of these writers during their lifetimes, apart from the significant works themselves. If frequent opacities remain, well, there is always the novel or play or short story. *Those* pieces of string can also be pushed as they pull us.

Several of the writers attempt a classification of "the novel" or the purposes of novels. Françoise Sagan, perhaps because she felt that she should have something intelligent to say to the visiting American gentlemen, tried to divide the novel which tells a story from "le roman où l'on discute." Others suggested other distinctions of varying degrees of utility. There are many ways of classifying this form which is still too rich for classification. None of the conversations took note of a division which is perhaps too close for comfort to every writer. First, there is the novel which resolves in the imagination problems which the novelist cannot solve in his life on earth; second, there is the novel which projects a purging confusion—the facts of trouble as they are—and so leads past pain and confusion. In the first case, there is the novel of dogged, blasting will, usually overwilled, formal, and stilted (Graham Greene's religiosity can serve as example). In the second case, there is clumsiness and a loosening of grip (*Tender Is the Night* is one of many American examples).

In a hypothetical third case, the confusion is both projected and resolved: aspiration becomes achievement; a hero is created and a time-defying masterpiece is born. Perhaps the novelist among those in *Writers At Work* who has shown the best way toward that total fulfillment is Joyce Cary. The interview with him catches both the intensity and the sweetness of his imagination: "I am influenced by the solitude of men's minds, but equally by the unity of their fundamental character and feelings, their sympathies which bring them together . . . . Oh, I've been telling stories ever since I was very small. I'm telling stories now to the children of a friend of mine. I always tell stories."

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Is Fiction Human?

FOUR OF THESE COLLECTIONS[1] are the first books of their authors, and they come with the customary alarming dustjacket fanfares of greatest-this and subtlest-that. The blurbs betray less desperation and bravado than those for first novels: we believe somehow—or editors do—that ours is the great age of the short story, and the young writer who drapes a Siamese cat over his shoulders and exposes his big white cannibal teeth for the celebrity pages of *Harper's Bazaar* is breezily confident, having been assured on all sides, that the world and *The New Yorker* are his personal oyster.

Harold Brodkey's collection is simply dumbfounding, not fiction but a cosmetic application of the limberest and most knowing *faux-naïf* manner to the most elementary preoccupations of women's-magazine maudlin—rather like the roué who, having exhausted every other sensation, has a try at what he regards as innocence:

> All I know is that Edward needed my love and I wouldn't give it to him. I was only thirteen. There isn't much you can blame a boy of thirteen for, but I'm not thinking of the blame; I'm thinking of all the years that might have been—if I'd only known then what I know now. The waste, the God-awful waste.
>
> Really, that's all there is to this story. The boy I was, the child Edward was. That and the terrible desire to suddenly turn and run shouting back through the corridors of time, screaming at the boy I was, searching him out, and pounding on his chest: Love him, you damn fool, love him.

Really, that's all there is to this racket: all you have to do, to conclude a story, is race back shouting "Love!" through those dependable corridors of time which are pretty well worn by now but can still yield up the echo of a choked sob. Anyway Frank O'Connor, bland old sentimentalist, is so impressed that he waxes simultaneously banal and incoherent: "Harold Brodkey is a master of narrative prose—prose that does not merely describe an artistic experience, but conveys it as poetry does."

Mr. Brodkey is not unskilful: his grasp of the tricks of the trade is in fact very depressing. "Sentimental Education," for instance, tells of a shy Harvard undergraduate who falls in love with a beautiful Radcliffe girl, signs up in Professor Bush's class on Metaphysical Poets to be near her, eventually has an idyllic coltish affair with her (they of course scrub their faces

[1] FIRST LOVE AND OTHER SORROWS, by *Harold Brodkey*. Dial. $3.50. VICTORIA AT NIGHT AND OTHER STORIES, by *Uli Beigel*. Random House. $3.00. KING OF THE MOUNTAIN, by *George Garrett*. Scribner's. $3.50. COLOR OF DARKNESS, by *James Purdy*. New Directions. $3.50. A BIT OFF THE MAP AND OTHER STORIES, by *Angus Wilson*. Viking. $3.50. EXILE AND THE KINGDOM, by *Albert Camus*, translated by *Justin O'Brien*. Knopf. $3.50. THE SHE-WOLF AND OTHER STORIES, by *Giovanni Verga*, translated by *Giovanni Cecchetti*. University of California Press. $1.50.

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vigorously like good little children after each session in bed; they're really awfully sweet, and one can't help but enjoy watching them), and sees her leave for summer vacation with considerable sadness: " 'God!' he said to himself. 'I love her'." The style behaves with a tender, awkward, confused, almost disarming inanity: "After that they took to kissing each other a great deal"; "The truth of the matter is, they were caught up in a fever of their senses";

> "Listen, Caroline, we haven't done the right thing. You want to have children?"
>
> A pink, piteous flush covered Caroline's face. "Oh," she said.
>
> "We ought to get married," he said doggedly.

If you go for chromium melancholy and like to think of life and art as essentially uncomplicated by anything more than the need to turn a phrase, Mr. Brodkey is your man: "When we landed in Dieppe, my delight—let me say that my delight rose like a flock of startled birds"; "I listened to Duncan and the distant phonograph and the dreamlike rush of the waves, and I knew I would survive my youth and be forgiven." One would, indeed, prefer to forgive if it were not for the last five stories in the book. All these are about a girl named Laura, who achieves a measure of immortality as the most infantile heroine in the tragic history of *The New Yorker*. In youth she finds "her rear ample (too ample; with sudden savagery, she swatted it)," does "an exploratory bump and grind" before a mirror and bursts into girlish laughter, and inspires the author to conclude his introductory story about her with convulsive archness: "Sullen juvenilia, that was her. Bad world. Bad Laurie." At twenty-seven, this child-bride is so charmingly incompetent that she excites her husband into judging himself with ecstatic responsive accuracy: " 'I'm infantile,' Martin said, looking at her in a funny way, confused and tender." For he too is incompetent and therefore exciting: "He looked so large and concerned, so vague and helpless before the mystery of rearing a daughter, that Laura suddenly arched her back and felt quite passionate." And they rise to their apocalypse on a suburban lawn located somewhere between The Talk of the Town and the short notices of less important books:

> "You want to cry on my shoulder or do you want to cry alone?"
>
> "Alone," said Laura. "But don't go too far away." Oh, the world was sad, she thought. Oh, the separateness of people. Oh, the clumsiness of being a woman.
>
> Martin sat in the lawn chair and drank his highball. His heart was full. And, smiling peacefully in the darkness, Laura cried.

Miss Beigel is a far more honest writer than Mr. Brodkey: her language makes some effort to accommodate itself to the contours of experience. The trouble is that for Miss Beigel the locus and trap of experience is almost exclusively the dark interior of a neurotic feminine sensibility. Most of her stories are explorations without map or motive: happiness and unhappiness are both self-generated, a swooning causeless malaise prevails,

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external events comprise not an action which one determines but a backdrop against which one poses in various attitudes of quiet desperation; invariably, consciousness invalidates action—

> In any case it is this stained glass window of consciousness through which, Gerald believes, all life can be known. Conviction, persuasion, are more real to him than the action, which is truth.

That the existentialist nightmare *can* be a subject for fiction, Dostoievsky proved in its first instance, *Notes from Underground*; but in this unique and merciless nouvelle Dostoievsky is the author, not the subject, the geographer of the maze and not its victim. In one of her stories, "The Mourners," Miss Beigel does stand off, the horror she suggests is real and caused, and its mysteries are too disquieting to be either denied or wholly acknowledged. The refugee cuckold who decides in his grinning renunciation of mankind to "misplace" his sons somewhere outside civilization, and apparently succeeds before he commits suicide, makes sense and is sufficiently at home in the postwar world of involuntary exiles; he is an independent creation, even though sometimes the author seems to know less about him than she lets on and mystery evaporates into mystification.

As for the rest of the collection, there is little except the wordy self-torture of the discontented intellectual coed—some pretentious clanking symbolification about such things as cold snow and hot electric heaters, much deep brooding (at times unintentionally comic: "very simply, without thinking, I became pregnant"), and always in plain sight the shredded nerve-endings of sophisticated modern femaleness.

George Garrett is another writer who has read his homework in *Mademoiselle*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *The New Yorker*. "They were sitting in a little *trattoria* beside the Arno," he says abruptly; and the befuddled reader, not yet informed that the latest American Bohemia is the land of the Caesars, may be excused for wondering what a *trattoria* is—restaurant? restroom?—and whether the Arno is a cartoon or a celebrated Spanish dancer. S. J. Perelman makes his living (in *The New Yorker*!) by disposing of this sort of writing for all time: "The Patagonian *demi-vierges* were shaking their little *iabots* . . . . " In the *trattoria* story, the weak husband and the wise disillusioned wife move finally into a scene that Mr. Garrett has vulgarly parodied, at least in unconscious anticipation, straight out of *La Strada* with its chain-breaking strong man:

> While his companion passed the hat, the strong man sat in the street and looked at his legs, smiling a little. She turned away and looked at Harry. Poor Harry would never understand. Whatever she finally decided to do, Harry would never understand.

Nor, *carissima*, will Harry or the reader ever care, unless you say it in good English.

Mr. Garrett offers, also, several varieties of gripping psychodrama, one about a boy and his father who come through a pseudo-Hemingway test of courage with bathos unimpaired ("He was thinking, as he bailed, that

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maybe being a man would be like that, going ahead with something and doing it because you had to even when you knew what the outcome would be"), another a dreadful pseudo-Lawrence story about a professor's wife who falls for the new Italian (*sic*) gardener ("The leaves were burning slowly, going up in pale smoke, and he was whistling a tune she didn't know"), another a cornpone-and-metaphysics documentary *à la* R. P. Warren about a Southern politician, and a number of nondescript anecdotal pieces more or less obviously autobiographical and unworked. After all these, as if to prove everything else a mistake, comes the last and longest story in the volume, "What's the Purpose of the Bayonet?": a sardonic evocation of the hells available for inspection to a soldier of the Occupation of Europe, culminating in the scene of the beating of the whores by Austrian police—

> The women were all crying and screaming and begging and praying. The cops were running around in circles like sheep dogs. They'd beat at random and then spontaneously single out an individual and beat her down to the floor, the truncheons blurring with fury and speed. Some of the cops had their shirts off. One or two were naked themselves. They had wild, crazy faces like men hopped up on dope. One man sat on a table where the record player was, changing the records, smoking and just watching.

The purpose of the bayonet is, as the story reminds us, to "Kill! Kill! Kill!"; in this hallucinated story an American soldier takes the time to observe, off duty in the halls of hell, the privileges and consequences of his vocation.

The most idiosyncratic among these first collections is *Color of Darkness:* James Purdy has a diabolical ear for low-life dialogue, and his attitude toward the human race is that of an exterminator toward cockroaches. The long story with which the volume concludes, "63: Dream Palace," is a somewhat too wilfully crazy fantasia about two boys from West Virginia one of whom gets mixed up with a would-be writer, a would-be patroness, and a pack of homosexuals in New York: the talk, especially of the rustics, is frighteningly authentic, but nothing else—least of all the lumpish satire about New York artiness—comes off.

Mr. Purdy's attitude is always a rather remote disgust, and his aim is always horror. Often the attitude bears down on the material and seems to determine it altogether from the outside: there *must* be horror, the son *must* hate his father and give him a paralyzing kick in the groin, the mother *must* drive her son half-mad by threatening to throw the snapshots of his father into the furnace, no motivation is required since we unanimously affirm the total depravity of mankind and the desirability of its extinction. In at least three of the stories, however, the horror is intrinsic enough. "A Good Woman" is about two middle-aged housewives in a small town who pass their lives at the movies and in a drugstore over ice-cream sodas:

> When Maud got home that night she found that Obie had arrived. He was a little cross because she had not prepared dinner for him.

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"I was not sure you was coming," Maud said.

She prepared his favorite dinner of fried pork chops and French fried potatoes with a beet and lettuce salad and some coffee with canned milk and homemade preserves and cake.

"Where was you all day?" Obie asked at the table, and Maud told him she usually went to a movie with Mamie Sucher and afterwards she went to the drug store and got a soda.

"You ought to cut down on the sweets," Obie said, and Maud remembered having caught a reflection of herself that day in the hall mirror, and she knew that she was a long way from having the same figure she had had as a girl. For a moment she felt almost depressed as Mamie said she was all the time.

There are two stories of freezing hopelessness: in one, "Eventide," a Negro mother mourns the departure of her son, who has moved into the white world; in the other, "Man and Wife," a beaten weakling of a man comes home to his mountainous wife to tell her he has lost his job because his eye for the boys has been noticed. In one of the stories, "Don't Call Me by My Right Name," the horror is arbitrary and comic, like a nightmare in retrospect. A newly married woman, having decided she does not like her husband's surname, insists he must change it and finally, after a drinking party, insists several times too often:

"Will you change your name?" she said.

"We will live together the way we have been," he said not looking at her.

"We can't be married, Frank, with that name between us."

Suddenly he hit her and knocked her down to the pavement.

She lay there for a minute before anything was said.

"Are you conscious?" he said crouching down beside her. "Tell me if you are suffering," he wanted to know.

"You have hurt something in my head, I think," she said, getting up slightly on one elbow.

"You have nearly driven me out of my mind," he said, and he was making funny sounds in his mouth. "You don't know what it means to have one's name held up to ridicule like this. You are such a cruel person, Lois."

Angus Wilson does not care much more for people than Mr. Purdy, but Mr. Wilson is, as we expect from Englishmen, a good deal more urbane in exposing his revulsion. His title story is another tiresome satire, very familiar these days, about the angry young English literati; "Ten Minutes to Twelve" is a portentous allegory, with the specific density of a marshmallow, about the downfall of Old England; "Once a Lady" is another unsuccessful variation on a theme by Lawrence; "A Flat Country Christmas" examines the bleak obsession with class of young political Englishmen ostentatiously "emancipated" from class. "After the Show," a more ambitious piece, is an interesting failure about a 17-year-old Jewish boy trying to escape into something like life from the commercial preoccupa-

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tions of his family, especially of his vigorous shrewd grandmother: the old woman is convincing enough, but the circumstances add up to nothing more than a sequence of vignettes, at times heavily sordid, without development or illumination. The other considerable story, "More Friend than Lodger," is the closest thing to a success in the volume, a self-portrait of a perfect bitch who in sheer boredom commits adultery and in precise calculation withdraws from it; but again, as in most of the other stories, the glassy glitter of the style and the patness of plot-making seem to testify as surely to Mr. Wilson's boredom and distaste as to the characters'.

Stories like Mr. Wilson's and Mr. Purdy's make one wonder about the relation of the artist, not to society necessarily, but to the human race: Is art, and in particular fiction, *human*? Albert Camus, at least, is concerned with such large human issues as the dignity of man and the need for compassion; the stories in his volume one respects as the testimony of an honest and perceptive humanitarian, and the honesty and perceptiveness are in the style, which is plain and truthful without cliché. Still, Camus' interest in humanity is Schweitzerian rather than, say, Tolstoyan: to the abstraction "humanity" he is devoted, and to any fraction of it; but his characters exist in no personal depth, they are scarcely visible in competition with what they are intended to stand for, and their situations are all too obviously schematic and parabolical. This is not to deny Camus' special gift for describing the stony murderous magnificence of the North African landscape, or his special sensitivity to the intolerable condition of modern man. Nevertheless, serious and humane as Camus clearly appears in these stories, the stories themselves are as solemn and restricted as philanthropy, with none of the true storyteller's gaiety of impulse and overflowing curiosity about persons and things in spite of all the trouble and heartbreaking somberness in the world.

The true storyteller, like Giovanni Verga, loves to tell stories because he loves to talk about people, good, bad, and indifferent (gossip is the beginning of fiction, as Henry James's notebooks bear witness). Verga is no humanitarian, he has no delusions about changing his sullen and explosive Sicilian peasants, he does not stoop or condescend, he is merely endlessly interested in the details and patterns of their hard and often bitter lives. What he discovers, everywhere, is vitality: the strength of brute impulse, the strength to suffer without self-pity, the will to endure at least and to live if possible.

Even hopelessness can be a kind of strength. The quarry-worker Rosso Malpelo, in the story of that name,

> . . . was used to everything: to slaps on the head, to kicks, to blows from the shovel handle or the packsaddle strap, to being insulted and jeered at by everybody, to sleeping on stones, his arms and his back broken by fourteen hours of work; he was used to fasting too, when the boss punished him by taking away his bread or his soup. He said that the boss had never taken away his share of blows; but blows didn't cost anything. He, however, didn't complain, and got his revenge on the sly behind their backs, with tricks that seemed to have been planned by the

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> devil; and so he always took the punishment, even when he wasn't the guilty one. True enough, if he hadn't done it, he was capable of doing it; and he never tried to offer excuses; it would have been useless anyway.

Malpelo chooses to make the best of having been born: he wards off blows, befriends a boy under the guise of mistreating him, tells the truth as he sees it, and at last vanishes into the deadly interior of the quarry on a job that nobody else will undertake:

> As he left then, he remembered the miner who got lost years and years ago, and who still walks and walks in the dark, crying for help, and nobody can hear him. But he didn't say anything. After all, what good would it have done? He took his father's tools, the pick, the hoe, the lantern, the sack of bread, the flask of wine, and started out:—and he has never been heard of since.

The title character of "Ieli" is much gentler and less articulate than Malpelo, but similar in his uncomplaining endurance. The pathos of such people is, of course, that they never see themselves as pathetic or really envision the possibility of any other existence than the one they bear with dignity: they would as soon question the seasons or the sun and moon. Ieli, ill-starred horsekeeper and later shepherd, humble innocent savage used to his own company only, has the bad luck to fall in love and the worse luck to marry the girl, who takes him only as a last resort. Given the pert and frivolous Mara, the conclusion is inevitable:

> He said nothing more; he had become dark and gloomy like a gathering storm, while he was bent over the sheep he was shearing. Mara shrugged her shoulders and went to dance. She was flushed and gay, her black eyes looked like two stars, and when she laughed you could see her white teeth, and all the gold she was wearing beat and glistened on her cheeks and breast, and she looked just like the Madonna. All at once Ieli straightened up, the long shears in his fist, so white in the face, as white as his father, the cowherd, had once been, when he shook with fever by the fire in the hut. He looked at Don Alfonso—his fine curly beard and the velvet jacket and the gold chain on his vest—who was taking Mara's hand and inviting her to dance; he saw him reach out with his arm, as if to press her to his chest, and she was letting him do it —then, God forgive him, he lost his head, and cut Don Alfonso's throat with a single stroke, just like a kid's.

In "Nanni Volpe," a cunning peasant passes the last years of his life in triumphant ease by playing off his young wife, who is—not, perhaps, wholly out of altruism and love—devoted to him, against his ne'er-do-well nephew, who is not; and the old man tricks them both from beyond the grave by cheating both of the inheritance that each has been given to expect. "Donna Santa's Sin" is the sort of story Hawthorne might have written if he had had some blood in him and a live culture to write about: In church during a vivid sermon on hell, an apparently saintly wife

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collapses crying "I'm a sinner!" and has a miscarriage; and her husband, himself an unbeliever, can never lose the suspicion, despite her repeated denials even at the point of death on receiving the last sacrament, that her outcry was more than a Christian formality—

> "What kind of confessions do you make? What do you go and tell the father confessor, you women? . . . If you never tell the truth! . . . "
>
> The poor woman wept, was desperate, gave a thousand assurances, and swore a thousand oaths. Sometimes, at the shouting, cousin Orsola ran over and gave him a piece of her mind:
>
> "But what do you want from her anyway? Do you want her to invent sins? Are you absolutely determined to be a cuckold?"
>
> And he had to swallow this too, and keep quiet!
>
> And when all of them, together with Don Marco Crippa and the pharmacist, laughed about the other unfortunate husbands, he had to lower his head and change the subject.

There are also stories of passion: "The She-Wolf," about an accursed woman who is "the temptation of hell"; "Cavalleria Rusticana," a sour comedy of village courtship that ends abruptly in betrayal and death; "Gramigna's Mistress," about the lunatic passion of a woman for a romantic outcast; "Temptation," a terrifying little story about three men on an idle jaunt who, having accosted and joked with a pretty girl, are in a moment driven to rape and murder.

The human paradox, of which fiction is the literary application, is that eventually we can know other people better than we know ourselves, and that we can never know humanity at all. At its greatest, fiction is never abstract or autobiographical, it is always about other people: the writing of great fiction is the most altruistic act of understanding in the world. The writer can be as smart as a Paris gown, or as self-analytical as Dostoievsky's underground man, or as concerned about the fate of mankind as a selfless missionary; but nothing short of the exuberant conviction that the individual life of *somebody else* holds all human truth and human potentiality will impel the writer to make even a start toward the writing of genuine fiction. Times change, so do people, and it becomes more and more difficult to sustain an exuberant conviction about anything: Verga wrote in the 1880's, Camus writes in a room next to us today. But we all live in hope of the unexhausted possible.

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JOSEPH BENNETT

Five Poets[1]

MAY SARTON has a limpidness of statement that seems easy—actually it is deft and worked and subtle. While one may find her even tone somewhat monotonous when she is read in bulk, this is largely because one may not be paying enough attention to her detail, which is very unobtrusive, yet very careful, sure and particular. Her poems need a good deal of watching because they are deceptively smooth; yet often they will reach out and smite the reader with unforeseen impact, perhaps after three or four readings when they seemed nothing at all, merely casual and measured, somewhat droning observation:

One is large and lazy;
One is old and crazy;
One is young and witty;
One is a great beauty,
But all feed you the wind,
And each of them is blind.

How then to recognize
The hard unseeing eyes,
Or woman tell from ghost:
Human each is, almost—
That wild and glittering light—
Almost, and yet not quite.

These are "The Furies," and they are quite good—a moral is later drawn and the poem closed rather neatly and with a New England bustle of properiety—yes, it is feminine, and certainly Emily is lingering somewhere in the backdrops, yet it is good, and sincere, quite cleanly stated, with directness and authenticity:

Wrap you in glamour cold,
Warm you with fairy gold,
Till you grow fond and lazy,
Witty, perverse, and crazy,
And drink their health in wind,
And call the Furies kind.

Somewhat drab, of course, after the brilliant first two stanzas, but necessary, granting Miss Sarton's sensibility—and why should this sensibility not be granted, considering the heritage in American letters it represents so candidly?

[1] IN TIME LIKE AIR, by *May Sarton*. Rinehart. $2.75. PEGASUS AND OTHER POEMS, by *C. Day Lewis*. Harper. $3.00. THE OPEN SEA AND OTHER POEMS, by *William Meredith*. Knopf. $3.50. THE GREEN HEART, by *Brenda Chamberlain*. Oxford. 12s. 6d. MAGELLAN, by *Ann Stanford*. Talisman Press. $5.00.

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I also like:

Our first arrival was a square room,
Brilliant parquet of clover
Designed as a stage for the trees
And their subtle conversations,
Diapason of faintly stirring leaves; . . .

"The Metaphysical Garden" is an excellent poem—a graceful lushness and ease of language, such as the above, ushers in perceptions and morality. It is "Brilliantly sharp./We could read each leaf" and it deserves a lot of reading, although it comes up at you more quickly than much of her work.

Look out for such discoveries as: "The terrible and quilled,/Heraldic porcupine" . . . "I never saw my father passive;/He was electrically massive" . . . "Here is love, naked, lying in great state/On the bare ground, as in all human faces."

A phoenix, a frog, a mysterious salt, a Piero della Francesca, a sun boat, love and mourning, spires sleeping in a quarry—there is great sincerity here, a gift for language, and quiet, serene emotion. Miss Sarton's book is a genuine pleasure—touching and thoughtful and accomplished—and it leaves real memories of occasions, thoughts and sentiments given us by this small-voiced, beautifully-qualified poet. Read her; she will give you pleasure and a consciousness of quality and esteem.

C. Day Lewis' "Pegasus" is an excellent and spacious poem, grave, contemplative, joyous and surprising. A slipsmooth polish of language—

It stood there, solid as ivory, dreamy as smoke;
Or moved, and its hooves went dewdropping so lightly
That even the wild cyclamen were not broken:
But when those hooves struck rock, such was their might
They tapped a crystal vein which flowed into song
As it ran through thyme and grasses down-along.

—as if born in an airstream; and an unobtrusive but unshakable control of theme that proceeds through delights and delicacies of conceits and variations—

. . . but that instant it broke out wings like a spread
Of canvas, and sailed off easily overhead . . .

. . . it swirled
Towards him, circled him round in a dazzling mist,
And one light hoof just knocked upon his breast . . .

—to an arched and sparkling ending, profusive and jewelled, all pleasure and contentment and abounding:

Wings furled, on printless feet through the dews of morn
Pegasus stepped . . .

A masterful, important poem.

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Similarly, "Psyche," full of caprices and devices—"Timidly then she touched his flank, which flowed/Like a river dreaming of rapids"—works itself out in a more somber fashion, but the framework and the ornament are more delightful than the moral, which is rather obvious, sententious, and monitory. "Pegasus," more purely a construction, and more uninhibited, is the better poem.

The best is "Baucis and Philemon," which is pitched in a lower key: rather quiet, and rustic, and brown oaked—autumn leaves, cider and russet—it is hard to pick out phrases—"The year goes out in a flash of chrysanthemum"—but easy to say that it is hard, definite, controlled; emotion welling through as the network of language tightens—a long graceful loop thrown upon the air and closing around that most priceless of the poet's prizes—a burst of the heart, a seizable wellspring of feeling all integrated and forced-in to a rounded form—a granite curve encircling a constantly rising pool of depth and sorrow, the joy that is found in process.

I find other things to like in this volume—elegance of language:

Upon the wall lizards immutable basked
Like vitrified remains
Of an archaic, molten summer. Bronze
Cherubs shook down the chestnuts
From trees over a jetty, where fishing nets
Were sunshine hung out in skeins
To dry, and the fishing boats in their little harbour
Lay breathing asleep. Far
And free, the sun was writing, rewriting ceaselessly
Hieroglyphs on the lake—

and a logical sorting out of experience, as with the child, the youth, and the aging man who give us Mr. Lewis' summation: "Last Words":

—Or the ageing man, seeing his lifelong travel
And toil scaled down
To a flimsy web
Stranded on two dark boughs, dissolving soon . . .

Nevertheless, in all due honesty, I must set down my opinion that the poems contained in the middle section (Part Two) of this volume are a failure. Labored, tired, "contemporary" with a dying fall—there is here the "intensity" of the 1930's, that obvious and forced straining to be awarded the adjectives "vital" and "meaningful," to participate in the "drama of the soul," to express "passion." The usual devices—singsong, patter, chatter, the dull and commonplace ordinary-poetic, the use of the I-ego, the self-conscious pose—are interspersed with such new-fangled metaphors as guided missiles and radar. One suddenly realizes that it is now twenty years since the 'thirties, and that these are dead poems (in this section); this idiom, always shop-worn, has become ludicrous.

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William Meredith represents the new generation in poetry, and any serious consideration of his latest volume must conclude that he does it well.

Restraint, well-chosen shyness, a preference for cutting under his subject, working his way up and out behind it, then wriggling around on either side—this is how Meredith gets his detachment—and the object, too, is detached, so that what you get is a well-cut poem, well-said, well-expressed. He works at length to get effects as if at random.

This random, easy quality is with difficulty arrived at, as anyone who has watched Meredith's poetry knows; like the dancer who must be perfectly trained to give such an ingratiating and effortless defiance of the laws of gravity: so that we get the feeling that anyone can do it; and this is our pleasure, in the first row, for we feel that this dynamic ease could easily be ours and cause us to rise, without effort on our own part, from our seats in the audience.

Is Meredith too shy, too reluctant? Too hesitant? Is this constantly a debut? Is the Muse constantly flickering around the footlights and flashing on and off through the wings, reluctant to come out and stand blinking in full view of the audience for a considerable period of time? Is it not, rather, the vagrant, vacillant quality of poetry itself that hesitates to expose itself too fully for fear that its impulse would give out, and that thus the difficult, unseizable impulse would fade into vulgarity and exhibitionism?

I prefer Meredith's understatement and his uncanny ability to have the Muse always flickering in the wings, in a way fluttering between the lines of his poems, after their endings and before their beginnings. In a sense the Muse hovers around these poems and uses their lines as a network—in the interstices and the open spaces is said what is said: nets to catch the wind of poetry. Read between and among and around the lines; especially, among the silences:

Stand at the transept when the delicate spokes
Of stone glow black against the sun of France:
It is as if the virgin's faith still burned.

Or as if the ancient glass itself still burned,
If you prefer that to the legend of God's mother.
Whatever it is, no splendor now in France
Puzzles the heart like the molten light in this house.

Do we want to carp at poetry like this? There are overall qualities: thoughtfulness, special-ity, delineation, ease, grace and winsome ways. Then there are poems which are *too* modest, *too* engaging, *too* shy—demure. Too simple, too explicit, and decorous, prim, well-behaved, well-intentioned. Relaxed and artificed, some of them. And some of them obvious and banal. To some readers, these poems will be disappointing in bulk; to others, their collection in one spot will be an aid to general understanding of the poet's means, methods and intentions. In some poems, a self-consciously simple, direct, overt and plain-speaking manner

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becomes a form of sophisticated cuteness; and understatement and affectation, a calculated "plain" effect.

But let us allow the poet his preferences and his tastes, since he makes such good overall use of them. Notwithstanding these minor cavillings, I would like to cast a final vote overwhelmingly in favor: this is a good book and a good poet.

Brenda Chamberlain's *The Green Heart* contains some poems about Wales which have what Dylan Thomas lacked: a balanced sense of life, of nature, and of style. Her Welsh fishing-villages have a Mediterranean quality about them; the Furies, the Sirens, are about to appear. I know of no higher compliment. Although she writes in a feminine personage, her poems are curiously masculine:

Children, born in salt spray,
Storm-birthed in winter dawns,
Little owls, sorcerers,
Flowers of our love,
Turn your eyes from empty waves,
Watch peat flame instead.
Your fathers fish for supper
In watermeads of death.
And the sea's a woman, desiring them,
And we are old, where she is ageless.

Her language is ripe and pungent and rich:

Full of years and seasoned like a salt timber
The island fisherman has come to terms with death.
His crabbed fingers are coldly afire with phosporus
From the night-sea he fishes for a bright-armoured herring.

Her descriptions of marine events are sharp—for instance the seal:

Nine feet of smooth-packed flesh.
Green as oil, he comes
Out of the secret cavern,
The mammalian bedroom,
Into open water's emerald waves . . .
. . . Though he turns an aquiline profile
And hoods his eyes with heavy lids,
He is nonetheless aware.

Everything is under control: of the dead ponies she writes, simply:

Soft entrails have gone to make the hawk arrogant.

A woman writes of her fisherman husband. Very effective; not poignant, rather pyrotechnic; solid and sensed and strong. A virile tone; an assault upon resignation; a refusal of acceptance. This means the Greek: the hard, soft Mediterranean quality: these are Aegean islands

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and these the archaic fishermen of Homer. Again the fisher bride laments for her spouse:

He could drown for joy in the salt of my hair.
We sail, he said,
Like the placid dead
Who have long forgotten the marriage-bed.

. . . The wave tore his bright flesh in her greed:
My man is a bone ringed with weed.

How solid this is; not archaic, but the firm line of the Greeks. I like this heroic quality, this fortitude that is not a stance, a pose, or a scheme; no aesthetic stratagem, but a hardly and harshly grasped reality. Brenda Chamberlain has real power, real originality, and an imaginative projection that is empowering and gripping. I like her dramatic enclutchment of her material, the soft entrails in the hawk's claws. She is tough, and her material is tough, and valid. She is archaic in the sense that she gets and goes after what the Greeks got, with the same material. But there are no "archaisms" in her style. It is rather blunt. How we could wish Thomas had had some of this. She is using some of the same material and using it better; Thomas never got the Greek effect; he remained with the Baroque of the late metaphysicals.

A final note: I should like to single out Ann Stanford's *Magellan* for mention, not particularly for any remarkable grace or felicities of style but for the interest of the narrative and for the effective, business-like way she has handled it. The poem is well worth reading—I found my interest sustained to the end. There is suspense, and dramatization, and a genuine narrative push that carries you along and holds the sequence together. This is hard to do; although, as I said, all the interest is in the tale itself, and not in the lyric, philosophic, tragic and contemplative decoration which is strewn across, but does not impede, the narrative. An effective presentation.

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GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

A Libretto: and Two Millstones of Our Time[1]

A FIRST-RATE LIBRETTO should provide a composer with occasions for magnificence—that is, it must have amazing and bold situations and characters, but its words must be inadequate to the dramatic realization of these occasions (like, for example, the librettos of *The Rake's Progress* and *Dido and Aeneas*). To turn *Othello* into *Otello*, Verdi had need of a stripped version of the plot and characters, and words of no great vigor; upon this frame he constructed an opera as he could never have done upon Shakespeare's play and words. *The Wife of Martin Guerre* by Janet Lewis is a frame upon which there could be constructed either an opera or a poetic tragedy of excellence. William Bergsma has tried to do the former; from what I can judge from the record of highlights (CRI-105x), he has not succeeded. Miss Lewis has, perhaps wisely, not attempted to do the latter; her especial gift as a poet seems to be a pure, delicate lyricism not congenial to high tragedy; the poetry of her libretto is always pleasing in itself, and occasionally rather more than that, but the reader cannot forget the magnificence of expression which her story needs and which her poetry only suggests. All the same, she has constructed, from materials provided by history, a plot worthy in the one direction of a Racine, in the other of a Verdi.

In 1700, Sir Richard Blackmore published a *Paraphrase on the Book of Job*, some of which has lasted, the several lines quoted by Pope in *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*. Some of the 1958, dramatic version of Job, *J. B.* by Archibald MacLeish, also may last, if it find its Pope. For on the whole, Dulness need not be ashamed of *J. B.*[2]

I do not mean that it succeeds completely in attaining to Dulness, for it is reasonably stageworthy: there's a good deal of plain theatrical juice in the piece; in the context of MacLeish's verse, the quotations from the Book of Job hit with something of the impact of the philosophers at the end of *The Skin of our Teeth;* the libretto of Job is, after all, one of the best, and MacLeish sticks fairly close to it. And too, he provides passages here and there to remind you that he can be a true, if thin, poet, not always of the dull kind. The last lines of the play are:

> *Blow on the coal of the heart.*
> *The candles in churches are out.*
> *The lights have gone out in the sky.*

[1] THE WIFE OF MARTIN GUERRE, A Libretto by *Janet Lewis*. Alan Swallow. $2.75. J.B., by *Archibald MacLeish*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.50. THE ANTIPHON, by *Djuna Barnes*. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. $3.50.

[2] Nor is John Ciardi. In *The Saturday Review*, he said of it: "Until now, no one [in English] since Shakespeare has found a sufficient answer to the problems that arise from the combination of poetry and the stage."

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Blow on the coal of the heart
And we'll see by and by . . . We'll see where we are.
The wit won't burn and the wet soul smoulders.
Blow on the coal of the heart and we'll know . . .
We'll know. . . .

MacLeish's basic technique in the piece, however, is minification, that is, he makes the mighty mean. Job, for example: he becomes a contemporary New England business man carving a turkey at Thanksgiving dinner, and the language with which he reacts to learning that his oldest son has been killed is: "It isn't/True you little drunkard liar!/It can't be true! It isn't possible!" God and Satan: they are a couple of Godot-type actors, now sweepers in a figurative circus, who, by becoming Godmask and Satanmask, get to speak King James Version—though God also gets to be A Distant Voice, K.J.V. The poetry: when it is not neutral, it is usually bad, and there is not a character of any consequence whose diction is consistent from scene to scene. Two messengers, who appear in various guises, come as reporter and cameraman to tell J. B. and his wife that two of their children have been killed in a car accident. The first messenger is trying to talk a girl into helping them stage the breaking of the news for maximum photographic possibilities.

GIRL: *All I know is I don't like it.*
Keep them talking till a flash bulb
Smacks them naked in the face—
It's horrible.

FIRST MESS.: *It's genius! Listen lady!*
How do I get the photograph without?
Answer me that. How do I get the
Look a mother's face has maybe
Once in a lifetime: just before
Her mouth knows, when her eyes are knowing?

GIRL: *I can't do it.*

FIRST MESS.: She *can't do it!*
All you got to do is walk.
Wiggle your can. Keep them looking.
Then he [the second messenger] *tells them. Then I take them.*
Then you beat it. Then that's that.
Except the drink we're going to buy you
Payday evening if you're good.

The event, appealing easily to our prepared responses about the invasion of privacy, is irrelevant to the main action and theme of the play; the one idea in these lines which could possibly have occasioned strong satire is ruined by flaccid verse; the diction is low without humor, and violent without restraint or adequate occasion, in one fashion of our time; "just before/Her mouth knows, when her eyes are knowing" is inconsistent

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with the rest of the first messenger's diction. And the second messenger regularly gets speeches like this (*under his breath, staring at them as they come*):

> *I only, I alone, to tell thee . . .*
> *I who have understood nothing, have known*
> *Nothing, have been answered nothing . . .*

The chief minifying of *J. B.* is in the enterprise itself. To adapt a supreme dramatic poem, which already exists in an English worthy of it, and in the same act to shear the locks of a superhuman myth so that it stands familiar and prisoned in the slangy present: this is Dulness in action.

I cannot think of a high poetic tragedy which is not set, in relation to its author, far away or long ago or both. *The Wife of Martin Guerre* is set in mid-16th century France. *J. B.* is set in a reasonably modern and very expressionistic circus, producing the effect of a space-time limbo. *The Antiphon* is set in a country house in England during the Second World War. The reader cannot avoid judging the characters, their actions, dialogue, references, according to the standard of verifiable accidents, of low probabilities, of appearances. This standard is irrelevant to what tragedy does, is at the very least distracting to the reader; but I think its worst result is to make the audience intolerant of that high poetry in which tragedy finds its fulfillment. Ibsen's prose is as close as anyone has got to the true thing in an of-our-time-and-place tragedy. One's heart sinks, then, to read the opening lines of *The Antiphon*,

> *Here's a rip in nature; here's gross quiet,*
> *Here's cloistered waste;*
> *Here's rudeness once was home,*

nor does it stop sinking for 120 pages to come.

Nightwood, published in 1936, has owed its survival chiefly to T. S. Eliot, who must add to his other distinctions that of being one of the few people to have read it "a number of times", or at least to have admitted to this publicly. I cannot believe it took Djuna Barnes twenty-two years to make *The Antiphon* as opaque as it is; but surely it took a while, for this contribution to Dulness is substantial. She gets right down to essentials: no libretto at all, not even a bad one. At any rate, if there is a plot you don't feel it; conceivably you could figure one out, but a plot must generate interest and suspense, matters of feeling as much as of intellect; yet there *seems* to be a plot, so you are continuously baffled. There is a character whose name and occupation, in the dramatis personae, appear in quotes, "Jack Blow", "coachman"; he has almost nothing to do with the action; he has no defining traits of character; he is not a chorus; he talks a lot. Every character, whatever other idiom, plain or fancy, he is established as talking, abounds with florid metaphors whenever he wishes. Just to make doubly sure that the play is unstageable, the author has made considerable portions of the longish speeches inconsecutive in themselves and much of the give and take dialogue irresponsive, like mad speeches though no one here is mad. (Augusta is the mother, Miranda the daughter.)

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AUGUSTA: *Am I soon cargo of that creeping thing*
Whose very texture is the inside-kissing lip?
"Man owes a death to God", you say? So be it.
But if there is no God, then God forgive him!
You too are grown unkind with shivering.
Allay my sorrow then, you cruel girl;
Medicine me to some account more just;
Do not so fumble my futurity.

MIRANDA: *Blow less hard about the stage. Be still.*

AUGUSTA: *Then absolve me of the mischief is Augusta.*
Snatch me out. I come on me in vain.

MIRANDA: *The thing that's touched is sacked. Stand.*

AUGUSTA: *You won't even tell me how you are, or what.*

MIRANDA: *Trappist—sprung—and of an hard-won silence.*

Again, if you work hard you can discern in this passage a surrealistic sort of ersatz coherence; but this is work of a kind which an audience in a theater could not do if it wished and does not wish. So, here is a closet drama—not a dramatic poem but an unsuccessful play whose reason for being is its poetry. In this respect, the author has employed a formidable battery of devices to devastate us into boredom. To begin with, it sounds gorgeous, grandiloquent, in a pastiche Jacobean fashion; but page after page of grandiloquence, seldom relieved and then not for long, confusing, turgid, opaque—cumulatively this is mortal. She pushes her paradoxes out of sense but not into pleasure ("if there is no God, then God forgive him"). When the mother says to the daughter, "Then tell me, how the movements of the bowels?", the one type of bathos you can be sure is not involved is the obvious one (constipated? loose?). She takes an image-metaphor of real splendor (this aspires, remember, to hightype Dulness) and ruins it before our widened eyes by extending it into irrelevancy and/or by setting it in an irrelevant context. (This is the middle of Act II; Augusta is not going anywhere; Miranda has been in the conversation quite a while.)

AUGUSTA: *Farewell, daughter.*

MIRANDA: *Hail, mother.*

AUGUSTA: *Recall me to them all, Miranda.*

DUDLEY [her son]: "*Make her a child again, just for tonight.*"

MIRANDA: *The flank-plume of the greater bird of paradise*
Racked not more pride, than did the dancing lappet
Prowling at your hip that summer day
When you walked off the world.

AUGUSTA (pensively): *Your father said: "Don't wag your bottom."*

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One's laughter at this last line is uneasy; did the author mean it or not? A reference to a bottom is a sure-fire laugh-getter on stage, especially when it is part of a bathetic non-sequitur; yet so far as I could make out there is no occasion in the whole scene for this laughter and no follow-up on it. Polonius' advice to Laertes is boring to Laertes, not because it is bad in itself or because it is badly put, but because it is irrelevant to the occasion; however, to us the audience, the speech is not simply boring, for we appreciate the humor of the irrelevancy and besides it doesn't go on too long. The author of *The Antiphon* has improved on all this: she pushes irrelevancy so far that there is nothing else. That is, there is no context—only objects, some of them bright, swirling in profundity. "Lo! thy dread Empire, Chaos, is restor'd."[3]

Edwin Muir, whose command of blurbage is sound, though not quite so ornate as Ciardi's, writes: "I feel myself that *The Antiphon* is one of the greatest things that have been written in our time, and that it would be a disaster if it were never to be known." Well, *I* feel that it would be not quite a Hiroshima, but a pity all the same, for our age not to get the *Dunciad* it has earned.

[3] Despite the author, I got one tiny pleasure from the book—finding in itself, as one usually can in a bad play, its own epitaph:

Courtesy requires that when you speak,
You make it more than silence.

WILLIAM MEREDITH

Listening to Incense, in Translation[1]

WESTERN INTEREST in Japan has been characterized by a deep and abiding illiteracy. It is not likely that a scholar who did not read Hebrew or Greek would undertake to study the influence of one of those cultures on our literature, or that a reviewer illiterate in that tongue would review him; yet with regard to Japanese my predicament and what I gather to be Mr. Miner's is common enough. Contrary to the traditions of European scholarship, the west has relied almost entirely and uncritically, for its knowledge of Japan, on a sketchy and inaccurate body of translations and a devoted line of Japanese friends whose very names, on some occasions, seem to have comprised most of a European's Japanese vocabulary. Walt Whitman writing of the Japanese envoys he saw parade on Broadway in 1860 was only a little more ignorant of the tongue than the Japanese citizen Lafcadio Hearn after 14 years in Japan: "What Japanese he learned," Mr. Miner tells us, "was never sufficient for him to open his mind to his wife."

[1] THE JAPANESE TRADITION IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE, by *Earl Miner*. Princeton University Press. $3.75.

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Now we would be suspicious of a man who professed a burning interest in Sophocles which he allayed solely by reading Yeats's translation of *Oedipus* or of a Shakespearean who preferred Dryden's version of *The Tempest*. There is something equally partial and perverse in our interest in Japan, and it is not solely the great difficulty of the language that accounts for the refusal of several generations of artists and scholars to learn Japanese. They got what they wanted without it. Mr. Miner's story is an account of wilful adaptations, and it is occasionally a little wilful itself as a work of scholarship.

It is only since Perry's visit that Japan has been more than a province of *chinoiserie* in American and European art, but in the past hundred years artists in many fields and of varied talents have raided the culture. The good ones and lucky ones have found what they needed and turned it to essentially Western purposes. Mr. Miner treats the bad and unlucky ones as well, and some of the most entertaining pages of his book deal with forgotten fads—names that read like oriental verses on the transience of human glory: Sir Edwin Arnold, Yone Noguchi, Arthur Davis Ficke. The oblivion that has overtaken these authors is not the result of their being inferior orientalists; their works died of native English or American maladies.

The influence was transmitted through wood-cuts at first, and to the French before the English and Americans. The short verse-form of *haiku* was the first and principal literary influence, and the *nō* was not really felt until Pound, through Fenollosa's notebooks, received and transmitted it. Impressionism, Symbolism and Imagism all owe debts to the Japanese ambience which floated as mistily as ever Japanese artist could have wished over Europe at the end of the 19th century. What is striking is the diverse and conflicting principles that were derived from essentially the same Japanese sources, indicating of course that the surfaces and not the principles were what were being studied. There is probably no other theme which would invite comparison among poems by Whitman, Kipling, Wilde, Amy Lowell and Empson, comparisons which are as amusing as they are insignificant.

Indeed it is only in his treatment of the two major figures of our own time that Mr. Miner comes to grips with anything very serious. The chapter on Ezra Pound, the substance of which appeared in an interesting essay in this magazine, makes two valuable points about Pound's poetics: his fondness for the brief unrelated sense-perception as a summarising metaphor, and the use (especially in the *Cantos*) of an over-all image to which he feels it appropriate to refer images from any time or culture. The first of these, which Mr. Miner labors pretty hard under the Poundian title of "Super-position", is clearly related to the technique of *haiku*, although it is certainly a device inherent in the premises of lyric poetry. The second point, the master-image which Pound found significant in the *nō*, is indeed remarkably useful in solving the complexities of the *Cantos*. In dealing with both points, Mr. Miner explicates Japanese references.

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His treatment of Yeats seems less original and perhaps less accurate. Why he chooses to say that the Japanese doll in "Upon a Dying Lady" is Michio Ito, I cannot understand, in view of what Yeats tells us about the composition of that poem, and in view of its date. But the principal relationship of Yeats's work to the aristocratic *nō* is well set forth.

If the Japanese tradition is overstated, it is in the author's implication that these writers drank deep. What one sees, on the contrary, is the fascinated guess-work by which they proceeded to the poetic and dramatic ends that they and their 19th- or 20th-century American or British moment required. A recurrent failing in the book is Mr. Miner's insistence on his thesis. For example, in treating two of Pound's poems which are derived from H. A. Giles's *History of Chinese Literature* he will not give us the brief originals, presumably because they are not Japanese, but asks us to accept his statement that one is "completely reconstructed in a form borrowed from the Japanese." The truth is, of course, that in proportion as *japonisme* is often vague and ill-informed, it is often mere orientalism and confuses the Chinese with the Japanese. Mr. Miner acknowledges this principle but is not always scrupulous about its application.

At his best, the author is a skillful collector of Japanese apparatus in our literature, and is quite willing to acknowledge the literal and figurative illiteracy with which it was come by. His scholarship is a little oppressive when he refers to Pierre Loti as Viaud ("Pierre Loti"), a usage about equivalent to identifying the author of *Huckleberry Finn* as Clemens ("Mark Twain"), and this formality does not accord with a rather casual bibliographical technique. One looks in vain for the identity of a book of Hearn's of which the text says leisurely: "All of his translations of Japanese poetry, culled from here and there, have made up only one small, posthumous volume."

It is nevertheless an interesting and valuable book. We watch some of the most interesting figures of the past century guessing at what Japan and Japanese literature was like. There seems to have been no great harm in this kind of ignorance, because the poets who knew what they wanted found it. Pound wrote in his *Guide to Kulchur*:

> CIVILIZATION, to define same:
>
> I
>
> To define it ideogramicly we may start with the "Listening to Incense." This displays a high state of civilization. In the Imperial Court of Nippon the companions burnt incense, they burnt now one perfume, and now another, or a mixture of perfumes, and the accomplishment was both to recognize what had gone materially into the perfume and to write apposite poems.... It is a pastime neither for clods nor illiterates.

"There is a confusion in Pound's example, however," Mr. Miner tells us. "Two homonymous verbs, *kiku*, represented by different characters, are involved. One means 'listen', and the other 'taste' or 'smell.'" This is illiteracy of a very high order.

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IRVING SINGER

Painting vs. Ontology

I AM ALWAYS INTRIGUED when a philosopher proposes to study an art for the sake of what it can teach him. When Etienne Gilson remarks in the Preface to his Mellon lectures[1] that his book is not a philosophical approach to painting so much as an attempt to see what a philosopher can learn from that art, I feel the stirrings of something new and refreshing. Philosophers have not generally taken this attitude. Metaphysicians in particular have acted as if nothing in the empirical world could teach them anything. In their devotion to "first principles", they have consistently failed to put first things first.

What, then, is the first thing to be said about painting? I think Gilson expresses it perfectly when he observes that painters have an affinity to manual laborers just as poets and novelists are related to white-collar workers. When he says that painters think with their hands, when he locates the art of painting in the actual process rather than any a priori planning, when he deals with the painting as a physical object that suffers the same vicissitudes as any other bit of matter, when he shows how the fate of every masterpiece depends upon the chemistry of its paints and the varying interests of whoever collects or restores it—in all these observations Gilson speaks as a man who has patiently schooled himself in the realities of painting. Unfortunately, these realities have little philosophical significance in themselves. They take on significance only as a philosopher uses them to solve relevant problems. It is here that the metaphysician shows what he has really learned from the empirical discipline. It is here, however, that Gilson is at his weakest. I closed the book feeling that philosophy had intruded itself once more, that Gilson's devotion to Aristotle and Aquinas had made it impossible for the paintings he undoubtedly loves to teach him very much. Where does he go wrong? How does he fall short?

From the very outset, Gilson tells us that he is going to study paintings from an ontological point of view. Ontology deals with "being, or beings, such as they are in themselves"; he contrasts it with phenomenology, which considers things only in their relation to human experience. Since everything Gilson has to say is based on this conception of ontology, perhaps we ought to look a little closer at his attempt to distinguish it from phenomenology. The two views seem to be contradictory; actually, they are not. The phenomenology Gilson refers to maintains that a painting is a work of art only as it enters into a certain kind of experience. As far as I can tell, this is exactly what Gilson himself means by the "aesthetic existence" of a painting: "the mode of existence that belongs to paintings inasmuch as they are being actually perceived as

[1] PAINTING AND REALITY, by *Etienne Gilson.* Bollingen Series, XXXV. 4. Pantheon Books. $7.50.

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works of art and as objects of aesthetic experience." But then why is Gilson so dissatisfied with phenomenology? I think it is because he wishes to offer an approach to painting that will displace phenomenology in the sense of crowding it out rather than actually contradicting it. He hopes to do that by concentrating upon the "artistic existence" of painting: the mode of physical existence which is proper to it. Instead of approaching paintings in terms of the experiences to which they contribute, he wishes to examine them as the particular kind of material object that they happen to be.

If it were a question of restricting oneself to the physical character of paintings, there would be nothing wrong with Gilson's procedure. Paintings are material objects; they *could* be studied with no other property in mind. As I have already suggested, Gilson makes good sense as long as he does limit himself to this side of painting. But most of the time he does something else. Starting with the artistic existence of paintings, he tries to reach inferences about their aesthetic existence. In other words, he does phenomenology of a very special sort. From the physical nature of a painting he thinks he can reach certain conclusions about how it is to be experienced.

What's wrong with that? Well, let's see. Gilson remarks that a painting is "a static pattern" of colors, forms, lines. This is undeniable: paintings are hunks of canvas on which differently colored pigments have been applied in a variety of configurations. Faced with this trivial truth, Gilson feels a "puzzling ambiguity" of a sort that only a metaphysician would feel. These static patterns—they move! In "Epsom Derby" Géricault's galloping horses seem to fly through the air; in "Les Saltimbanques" Manet depicts an acrobat at the height of his leap, about to descend on the other side of a hoop; in Seurat's "Circus" a lady on horseback is gaily cantering around the arena. As he looks at these examples of dynamic action represented in a static medium, Gilson experiences a "feeling of incongruity." In the case of "Circus" he believes that Seurat has resolved the difficulty by emphasizing lines of the arena which force us to complete the circle in our imagination and thereby to attain "some sort of immobility"; in "Les Saltimbanques" Manet achieves a similar success by showing the acrobat at a moment of stasis. We are left with the impression that "Epsom Derby," which has neither stasis nor immobility, must be a failure as a painting. Comparing several works by Poussin, Gilson opts for those that convey a sense of "solid and harmonious stability more in keeping with the physical mode of existence that belongs to paintings." After this discussion we are thoroughly prepared for him to prefer the genre of still life over all others. In a still life there is nothing but solid, inanimate objects. Since a painting is itself nothing but a solid, inanimate object, that is what it is naturally best able to depict.

There are several ways in which we might discredit Gilson's approach. We could appeal to the authority of connoisseurs, and I think they are legion, who would feel no inclination to rank static scenes above mobile ones. Or we could bluntly say: I don't see any puzzling ambiguity, I

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have no feeling of incongruity—paintings are not movies, but why should that prevent them from representing motion? I think these responses are absolutely appropriate. But I also think that Gilson's trouble is more radical than they would indicate. His confusion is more like the philistinism of the Duc de Guermantes when Proust has him complain about the price of Elstir's "Botte d'Asperges": "He asked three hundred francs for it. Three hundred francs for a bunch of asparagus! One louis, that's all it's worth, even out of season!" Using Gilson's terminology, we might say that the Duc pretends to be talking about the aesthetic existence of the painting whereas actually he refers to the physical existence of what it represents. The absurdity of this is evident. But what Gilson says, though more subtle, is equally absurd. Unlike the Duc de Guermantes, he would favor Elstir's painting; yet in preferring the static over the mobile, and still life over everything else, he too is trying to reach conclusions about a painting's aesthetic existence on the basis of the physical existence of what it represents.

To say this, however, is not yet to show exactly where the absurdity lies. I think Gilson reasons in the following manner: "In Seurat's 'Circus' we don't really see the motion of a lady riding around the arena. We only see her at a specific moment, at a particular point of the circle, passing in front of this or that member of the audience. If a spectator looks for the representation of motion as such, he is looking for something the painting cannot provide. In a still life, however, the artist does not undertake more than he can successfully achieve. Here the immobility of the painting is never a barrier."

Assuming that this attempt to understand him is right, I would say that Gilson has his feeling of incongruity because he simply—or perversely, in the way that philosophers are often perverse—refuses to admit that motion can be represented by static objects. There is no puzzling ambiguity in the paintings he mentions. There is, however, a puzzling ambiguity in the word "represent" which may have caused his metaphysical malaise. In one sense of the word, "Circus" merely represents a segment of the arena caught at a split-second of time. Nothing else is *explicitly* depicted. You can't have motion at a split-second, and therefore motion cannot be explicitly represented in any painting. But this is not the only way in which something can be represented. Though motion is not explicitly shown, it is part of what is *suggested* by the painting. In another universe, there might occur solitary scenes like the one "Circus" explicitly represents; but in the world as we know it, that never happens. For us to see this scene is for us to see it as a scene in time. Consequently, the painting represents the rider's motion no less than her outline, though one is explicit while the other is only suggested. If someone denied that "Circus" suggests the motion of the lady on horseback, we would infer that he has never learned how to look at this kind of painting, just as most people have never learned how to listen to Bach's iconography.

Gilson's ontological attitude leads him into similar puzzles when he

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tries to define "the essence of painting." Much of the art he admires is traditional painting which represents nature and thus "imitates reality." But the perfection of imitation he considers to be deception—*trompe-l'oeil*. Since this cannot be the end of art, he feels the pressure of an antinomy. His solution reminds one of Clive Bell: the essence of painting belongs to "germinal form" whereas representation is always aesthetically irrelevant, though not necessarily a hindrance. This way of solving the problem he defends as follows: "Since the painter creates a form, by means of which he gives existence to a new being, all his obligations are to the very form that he creates and to the new being to which his art aims to impart existence, not to any external object, being, or landscape that he might try to imitate."

Once again we have a metaphysical quandary that, to me at least, does not ring true. For one thing, I can't see why *trompe-l'oeil* should be considered the perfection of representation. Any representation *might* deceive; and *some* paintings have intentionally tried to deceive. But this is merely a use to which representation has occasionally been put; it cannot possibly define its nature. Here Gilson has been fooled by the word "imitate." To represent is to imitate; to imitate is to duplicate well enough to deceive; therefore, the perfection of representation involves deception. There is a sense of "imitate" which allows this kind of use. An imitation mink is good only if it can actually pass as mink. This, however, is not the sense of the word which applies to representation. Rembrandt's self-portraits are representational, but no one would suggest that they are good only if they actually pass as Rembrandt himself.

Indeed, I wonder whether it is even appropriate to speak of representation as imitating. Leaving aside *trompe-l'oeil* since it is not characteristic of representation, no painting duplicates reality or copies its subject. To represent is to *re*-create from one point of view or another, to *deal* with the subject in a manner that the particular artist happens to have chosen. Renaissance painters are no closer to reality because they emphasize perspective, just as modern primitives are no further removed for having eliminated it. There is no preferential way of representing the world; every way succeeds if it is effective within the painting that employs it. Gilson ties himself into metaphysical knots because he assumes there must be one and only one way in which a painter can look at reality. This one way he associates with deceptive imitation; he cannot allow deception to be artistic and so he throws out representation as a whole. Once we realize that *trompe-l'oeil* is a special, very special technique, the antinomy disappears. Our attempt to eliminate deceptiveness does not require us to exclude representation from the essence of painting.

Actually, I myself feel no philosophical resistance against *trompe-l'oeil*. I think it has an aesthetic contribution to make, though at best a very meager one. *Trompe-l'oeil* fails because it is based on a superficial gimmick. Once the sensitive observer gets the point, he quickly loses interest. Aside from its initial shock, the painting generally has little or nothing to say. *This*, I believe, is the real reason why modern painters don't employ *trompe-l'oeil*—a perfectly good reason which can stand on its own feet

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without the dubious props of metaphysical jargon. When the Renaissance illusionists wanted to justify their kind of art, they maintained: first, that beauty could be found only in nature; second, that all good art imitates in the sense of deceiving. By its very example, modern art has disproved both of these theses: non-objective painting offers beauties that could never be found in nature; cubism, expressionism, and other types of representational painting have succeeded without being limited to any one particular way of representing. What can the dispassionate philosopher learn from this? Not that representation is inherently faulty, but that every painter is free to use it as he wishes. And if he wishes to discard representation, he is free to do that too.

Gilson reaches different conclusions because of the queer posture his ontology forces him into. He feels that a painting is something new, something creative; therefore in essence it does not refer to any external reality. That, however, is a *non sequitur*: paintings are indeed new and creative additions to the universe, but this does not prevent them from dealing with the world outside in any way they choose. Since paintings are material objects like oranges or apples, Gilson assumes that their aesthetic significance must be of the same sort. A material object must have form, but it need not have referential content. An orange or an apple does not represent; it does not refer beyond itself in the sense of pointing to something external. All of this is true, but why should we treat paintings as if they were pieces of fruit? If we looked at an orange and saw that one part is darker than the rest, we might well infer that it is half-rotten. But when Picasso paints an orange in two contrasting hues, we reach an entirely different kind of conclusion. We say this is the way Picasso has chosen to represent an orange. Different oranges have different hues; he has put together two of them as a means of saying something about oranges in general and juxtaposing two colors that interest him. The coloring of Picasso's orange *implies* a certain manner of thinking that is appropriate to his paintings. There is nothing in the material object—nothing in the colors themselves—that compels us to respond in this or any other way. It is something that we have learned from looking at Picasso's paintings in the way that he obviously wants us to. It is as if there were an understanding between us and the artist; and indeed there is a whole series of conventions that govern our aesthetic experience. When Seurat makes human features into V-shapes or Modigliani makes heads into ovals, we do not throw up our hands and say: Poor fellows, they either can't see or they can't draw. We recognize these devices as conventions for representing something without lingering over uninteresting details. We also take them as hints about the painting's form: the faces are V-shaped in order to contrast with the curved lines that suggest the motion of the horse and rider. In an abstract painting there might have been nothing but the design of curved and jagged lines. But, apparently, Seurat didn't want to paint an abstract design, just as he didn't care to use the conventions of Giotto or Velasquez. This is for him to decide. No aesthetician has a right to tell him what to do, to say that referential content is or is not essential to the art of painting.

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In Gilson's defense it might be argued that he is really interested in distinguishing paintings from what he calls "pictures": "A painting is the embodiment of form in a matter; the whole being of a picture is determined by the relationship that obtains between the image itself and some external reality." If this definition of a picture means that the image causes us to concentrate upon its subject at the total expense of everything else, Gilson does well to distinguish pictures from paintings. But this is not what he means. He really wants to say that pictures are distinct from paintings because of some ontological difference between them: they are different kinds of physical objects, form predominates in one and external reference in the other. And this, I suggest, is just plain wrong. To say something is a picture, a mere illustration, is to say a great deal about our response to it—it does not excite us in itself, it does nothing but direct our attention to the scene it is portraying or the event it is commemorating. Instead of musing about the colors, the forms, the *way* in which the picture represents, we think exclusively about its subject. A picture is a painting, but one that has not attained aesthetic value. As physical objects, the two are utterly indistinguishable.

The same kind of consideration applies when Gilson gives ontological definitions of words like "beauty" and "harmony." The latter he defines as the relationship of mutual adaptation between colors, masses, and lines of a painting. He reproduces three panels of the "Legend of Nastagio degli Onesti" by Botticelli. The first two panels have harmony, the third does not. These examples are excellently chosen and Gilson is quite right when he says that in the third panel "the scene of a banquet offers the eyes an unconvincing superposition of horizontals... the vertical division of the painted space, faultless in the first two panels, is sadly lacking here." But what is there about horizontals and verticals to explain the nature of harmony? As components of a physical object, they explain nothing. They are relevant only as they enter into our aesthetic experience. The first two panels are harmonious because their horizontals and verticals are *satisfying to the eye of a discriminating observer*. The "play" of the eye, that's what matters: the harmony of the two panels consists in their ability to bring it about. Gilson has a hard time understanding painters—Gauguin, Cézanne, Picasso, Kandinsky—who speak of rhythm in their art. He says rhythm is a musical notion, foreign to painting; he takes it as a "sure sign" that painters who employ this idea are trying to overstep the "natural limits" of their art. Possibly so, if their art is defined by reference to a static physical object; but not at all, if we assume, what is surely the case, that these men are trying to instill in us that joyful play of eye and spirit which *constitutes* the very harmony of painting.

Everyone who loves painting will appreciate Gilson's desire to place it under the aegis of Aristotle and Aquinas. He obviously wishes to protect it, in his fashion, against the hostility of a world that neither looks nor sees. But perhaps his paternalism is unnecessary. I think it is. I think painting can take care of itself—particularly modern painting, the baby of the family and yet in so many ways the child which is clearly the father of the man.

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